

Still Image

A visual and involving way of understanding concepts. Seeing is believing, as they say.

HOW?

1. Students work in small groups, the exact number depending on the type of image to be presented.
2. The teacher explains that a still image is like a photograph or a freeze frame on a video. It captures action, but is silent and motionless. It is a 'tableau'. Players use position, body posture and facial expression to portray an incident or an idea. Still images can be **realistic** (e.g. 'Leaving Home' - young evacuees waving goodbye as they set off for the countryside) or **symbolic** (e.g. 'Revolution' - a depiction of the meaning of revolution involving joined hands and fists breaking through imaginary chains).
3. The teacher explains the learning objectives. These determine the content, preparation method and resources needed for the images. For example, in order to study the push and pull factors involved in international migration (GCSE Geography), the teacher might provide a **photograph** of a migrant family arriving dishevelled and bewildered at a foreign port. Groups could re-create the photograph as a still image, inventing the names and life histories of the characters. Groups that didn't want to be tied to the photograph could use it as a prompt and make **up their own** image based on the learning objectives.
4. In some cases, still images can be created completely from **imagination** (e.g. in RE: portray a moral dilemma faced by a Sikh family), in others they can arise from **text** (e.g. a moment from a set play in English in order to study a theme or a character in more depth), in others technical knowledge is required which has to be **researched** (e.g. in Science: the vaccination of a small boy by Edward Jenner, or the control room of a hydro-electric power station).
5. Groups have time to prepare (this will vary from, say, 10 to 30 minutes depending on the learning objectives and method of preparation). Then the images are presented in turn to the class. Ground rules will be needed.
6. Each frozen image is sustained long enough (perhaps half a minute) for the audience to work out what it is portraying. Then the players can relax their positions a little without losing the overall shape of the picture. To bring out the meaning and the learning, **either**:
 - (a) members of the audience (including the teacher) ask questions. It's best if questions are directed to specific characters, calling them by role name rather than real name; **or**



- (b) the teacher takes the lead initially, tapping players on the shoulder in turn. When tapped, the player says what they are thinking and feeling. This is called *thought tracking*. It can, of course, lead to questions from the audience.

APPLICATIONS

- ◆ To portray and study moments in history, religious ceremonies, business life, a novel, a poem, a play, a biological process.
- ◆ To bring to life a photograph, drawing or painting.
- ◆ To freeze and examine movements in dance or sport.
- ◆ To provide a human angle on technical knowledge, for example a physiotherapist treating a specific injury.
- ◆ As a starting point for a piece of creative writing, in which case the image is made up from a simple prompt - an empty chair for example.
- ◆ To portray chemical reactions, mathematical truths, the laws of physics, or abstract ideas symbolically.

WHY DO IT?

Still images, like other dramatic devices, strengthen visual and creative forms of intelligence. They also develop 'abstract random' and 'activist' learning styles. Reading and writing abilities are not required in the process, though still images may create the motivation to read or write. Many students gain easier access to sophisticated ideas once they are set in a human context. Also, ideas that people have seen or taken part in are usually well remembered.

VARIATIONS

1. Still images may naturally lead to *Hot Seating* or *Forum Theatre*.
2. Still images may stimulate a period of research because they have aroused curiosity and raised unanswered questions.
3. Two or three still images could be presented in sequence to show, for example, *the progress of a scientific reaction*, or *significant moments in the build up to World War I*, or *the plot of a story*.
4. Still images might be prepared at the start of a new topic, for example *The Plague*. The teacher gives various scenes to be prepared (doctors attempting to cure rich young man, a priest praying for a young child brought by her parents). The questions asked and unanswered form the learning agenda for the next couple of lessons.