

Drama in the classroom - Tips to Get Your Students Educated by Bringing Drama Into Their Lives

By Peg Herring Plays are great for an after-school project, but classrooms are the perfect platform for drama as well. There are many ways to incorporate drama into subject matter that may capture the attention of even the most apathetic students.

- Scriptwriting: what better way to bring a subject to life than to let students make a skit to teach or demonstrate it? There are several advantages to skits in the classroom:
- Depth-Students can be required to do some digging to make their skits truthful. Emphasize in the assignment that facts must be the basis, even if exaggeration is used.
- Writing practice-Students who would hate writing an essay or even a paragraph are often eager to write a skit.
- Real-life feedback-Students see the audience's reaction and know how successful they were with bringing their idea to life.
- Cooperation-Students often do better writing their skits in groups, and they learn the give and take of ideas as they work together.
- Multiple Intelligences-Skit writing also allows more expression for kinesthetic learners, visual-spatial learners, and even musical/rhythmic learners if they're allowed to add background music, sound effects, original songs, or rap.

Some interesting ways to go from there:

Quotations-it's hard for some students to grasp what goes into quotation marks. After skits are read, a lesson on that topic will mean more, because what they wrote for their characters to say is right there in black and white. You might ask them to turn a section of their skit into prose, using quotation marks for what the characters said and adding a bit of description, the indicators of who said what, and some mention of emotion or movement.

Editing-Most of us write too much when we begin writing dialogue. Have students work on each others' scripts or in small groups and slice-and-dice to get the leanest, crispest dialogue they can manage. Read the "before" and "after" aloud to hear the difference.

Effect-Split the class into two groups. Have one half listen to the skit and watch as it's performed. Have the other half read it silently. Discuss as a whole the difference in perceptions. This can lead to discussion of why Shakespeare should be seen and not read.

Suggested skits:

- English: anything from transposing a short story to the stage to explaining why e.e. cummings hated punctuation.
- Math: the discovery of a process that changed mathematics, like the Egyptians working out geometry.
- Science: any great discovery; the skit might recreate the experiment or moment
- History: detail on an event or a fictionalized "what if". We tried Henry VIII for murder.
- Social science: a day in the life of, oh...Freud, maybe?
- Art/Music: the "story" of someone's inspiration for a famous work.

About the Author

Peg Herring is a retired teacher AND a published playwright and author. Her ebook, *Plays on a Shoestring*, is available at <http://www.keenpr.com/e-books> and her mystery novel, *Macbeth's Niece*, is due in bookstores in early 2008. You can email her at pegfish@yahoo.com or visit her website at <http://www.pegherring.com>.

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