

DRAMA

a day in the life. A convention in which students explore the experience of a person by working backwards from a significant moment or turning point in a character's life to build the story that accounts for the event. Students work in groups, using tableau, improvisation, and/or role play to depict key moments that may have occurred in the last twenty-four hours of the character's life. The scenes are then run in chronological sequence to depict the events leading up to the dramatically significant moment.

Anansi stories/tales. Anansi stories originated in West Africa, where the tradition of story-telling has thrived for generations. The Ashanti people in Ghana in the west of Africa still tell stories of Kweku Anansi, the spider, a trickster figure in African folktales, who both entertains and teaches life lessons. Many of the Anansi tales, or adapted versions of them with different heroes, now exist in North America, South America, the West Indies, and the Caribbean.

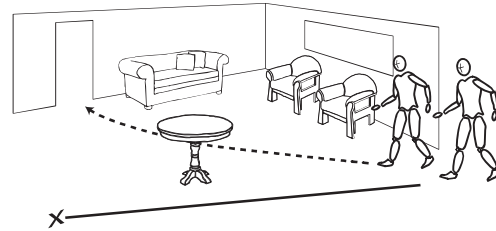
antagonist. The character who is the principal opponent of the main character in a play.

artefacts. Props, posters, maps, letters, or media materials that can be used to establish a character, enhance a setting, and/or advance a story.

atmosphere. The mood established for a drama, or for a scene within a drama. Music, lighting, sets, and costumes may all be used to help create a particular mood or atmosphere.

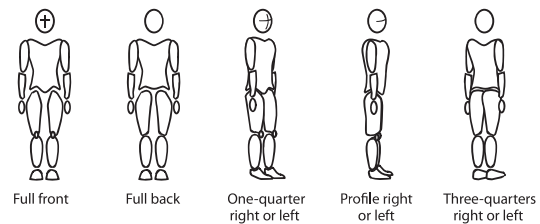
audience. (1) In a formal or traditional play, the audience is typically seated in front of or around the action of the play. (2) In a shared drama experience or role play in the classroom, the students typically are both actors and spectators in the experience. At times, the students are all in role together; at other times, some are out of role viewing a group presentation as audience members. They may also be audience members viewing a scene or presentation while they are in role (e.g., in role as the king's assistant, viewing a presentation by local villagers).

blocking. A technique used in the staging of a theatrical production to prescribe the positions and patterns of movement of actors on the stage.



body position. A general term used to refer to an actor's position in relation to the audience. The range of positions includes:

- *full front* (i.e., the actor faces the audience directly)
- *profile right* or *left* (i.e., the actor's right or left side is facing the audience)
- *one-quarter right* or *left* (i.e., the actor faces about halfway between full front and profile)
- *full back* (i.e., the actor's back is to the audience)
- *three-quarters right* or *left* (i.e., the actor faces about halfway between full back and profile)



caption making. A convention in which students work in groups to devise slogans, titles, newspaper headlines, or chapter headings that convey in words the intended message of tableaux or pictures. The captions may be shared orally by the groups, read out by a narrator, or written on placards to be read by the class.

ceremony/ritual. A set of actions prescribed by the beliefs or traditions of a community or culture and thought to have symbolic value.

choral speaking, chanting. The reading or reciting of a text by a group. Preparation for a performance may involve interpretation of the text; experimentation with language, rhythm, volume, pace, and different numbers of voices; and rehearsal.

chorus. A convention in which individuals or groups provide spoken explanation or commentary on the main action of a drama.

collective conscience. A convention in which students act together in a group to give the main character advice.

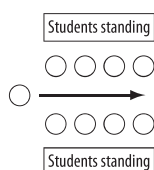
collective creation. A widely used genre in which students collaborate in a group to agree on a shared vision that represents a place or person in a drama. The idea can then be used as a reference for discussing ideas about the place or person. *See also* **collective understanding.**

collective drawing. A convention that focuses on building a context. An image is created by the class or small groups to represent a place or people in the drama. The image can then be used as a reference for discussing ideas about the place or person.

collective understanding. An interpretation of a character and what he or she is experiencing that is agreed on by all members of a group. *See also* **collective creation.**

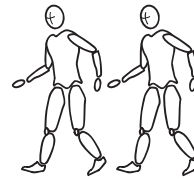
conventions of drama. Practices and forms of representation that are widely accepted for use in drama instruction as ways to help students explore meaning and deepen understanding. Hot seating, voices in the head, and freeze-frame images are a few examples, among many.

corridor of voices. A convention used to explore the inner life of a character in drama. The character moves along the “corridor” between two lines of students who voice feelings, thoughts, or moral concerns the character might be likely to have. The convention can also be used to explore the thoughts of a character who is facing a difficult task or decision. In this case, the voices would give advice and warnings. *See also* **voices in the head.**



creating an environment. The use of available materials and furniture to represent the setting for a drama (e.g., a courtroom, a bedroom). Sometimes a visual arts extension may be introduced to build belief in the drama (e.g., sheets of fabric painted to look like the walls of a cave).

crossing-stage procedure. Customary practice when two or more actors cross the stage. The actor closest to the audience (the downstage actor) slightly trails the other actor, so as not to block that actor, as shown below.



culture. The customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group, including the art works and other embodiments of the intellectual achievements of the group.

docudrama. A fictionalized drama based on real events and people.

drama anthology. A drama based on a collection of related sources about a particular theme, issue, or person. Both fiction and non-fiction sources may be used (e.g., diary entries, songs, poems, speeches, images, headlines).

dramatic exploration. The spontaneous, imaginative use by students of materials and equipment available in the classroom to create drama. The teacher observes and listens while children are exploring, and provides guidance as needed. For example, the teacher may pose a question to prompt deeper thinking, or may introduce new vocabulary.

dramatic form. (1) The compositional structure that shapes a drama, as opposed to its theme or content. (2) A broad category of drama that may include within it a number of styles (e.g., puppetry is a form, and different styles of puppetry are characterized by the use of glove puppets or marionettes or shadow puppets; dance drama is a form, and there are different styles of dance drama around the world, such

as Kathakali of India and wayang topeng of Bali and Java).

dramatic play. Imaginative, pretend play, largely self-directed, that is typical of primary students. The children assume roles, often dressing up and using everyday or found objects to represent objects in their pretend play (e.g., a ruler may represent a magic wand; a structure built of blocks may represent a fort). Students use dramatic play to enact familiar stories, role play real-life scenarios, and create and live through imagined stories and scenarios.

dramatic works. In an educational setting, a variety of drama works that are experienced, created, and viewed by students (e.g., plays, improvised drama, short scenes, tableaux, shared drama experiences, reader’s theatre scripts).

elements of drama. Fundamental components of drama, including the following:

- **character/role.** An actor’s portrayal of a character in a drama, developed with attention to background, motivation, speech, and physical traits.
- **focus or emphasis.** The theme, character, problem, event, moment in time, or centre of visual interest (e.g., in a tableau or staging) that gives purpose or impetus to a drama.
- **place and time.** The setting, time period (e.g., past, present, future), duration (e.g., one day), and chronology of the action of a story or drama.
- **relationship(s).** The connection(s) between people, events, or circumstances.
- **tension.** A heightened mental or emotional state resulting from uncertainty about how the conflict or problem in a drama will be resolved.

empathy/empathize. The capacity to “step into the shoes” of another and to understand and appreciate that person’s experiences and circumstances. Empathy is developed through role play, reflection, writing in role, and viewing and discussing plays, stories, and films. The ability to empathize with characters in drama is a fundamental aspect of building role/character and is essential to skill development.

farce. A comic drama that uses ridiculously improbable situations and horseplay, rather than wit, to create humour.

flashback and **flash forward.** Conventions used to provide different perspectives on the action in a drama by showing events from an earlier or later time. A *flashback* might be used to explain the causes of an action in the present, a *flash forward* to show an action in the light of its imagined or actual outcome.

flocking. A type of improvisation in which students move in groups, with no set pattern or in a diamond formation, following a leader and all doing the same movements simultaneously. This is an extended version of mirroring for three or more people. Participants do not necessarily need to be able to watch each other, as long as they can see the leader.

form. See **dramatic form.**

forum theatre. A convention in which students collaboratively explore options or possible outcomes in order to shape a dramatic scene. A dramatic situation is improvised by a small group while the rest of the class observes. All students participate in creating the scene – through discussion, by stopping the scene to make suggestions, or by taking over a role. The objective is to create an authentic scene that fits the dramatic context and is satisfying to the whole group.

four corners. An activity in which four signs or posters labelled with the possible choices are placed in the four corners of the classroom. Students move to the corner of their choice. Students find a partner in their corner and describe to the partner the reasons for their choice. Students are given three to four minutes to explain the reason(s) for their decision. Each pair then chooses the top two reasons for making their choice. Finally, students write their reasons on the group poster and sign their initials. Students at each of the four corners form a large group and choose a spokesperson. The spokesperson is responsible for presenting a brief summary of their choice and the rationale behind the decisions to the whole class.

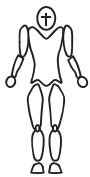
freeze-frame image. A convention in which students pose to make an image or tableau that communicates an idea or a theme or that depicts a moment in time. Also called a group sculpture or tableau. *See* **tableau**.

furthering the action. A group activity in which students build on one another's ideas about how to move the action of the drama forward.

games/warm-ups. Activities that help develop a group's readiness for intensive drama work. Such activities can promote group cooperation, trust, risk taking, and listening.

genres. The categories into which dramas and other literary works can be grouped. Examples include: thriller, comedy, action, horror, docudrama, melodrama.

gesture. A movement of the body or limbs used to express or emphasize a thought, emotion, or idea.



group role play. Role playing in which the whole group, including the teacher, acts in role in an imagined context. *See also* **role playing**.

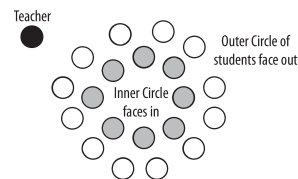
guided imagery. A convention used to help a group visualize the setting for a drama. The teacher or a student uses descriptive language to create a word picture of the physical setting and/or historical context in which the action takes place.

hot seating. A convention in which students allow themselves to be questioned by the rest of the group. The questioners may speak as themselves or in role (e.g., as reporters).

improvisation. An unscripted, unrehearsed drama spontaneously created by a student in response to a prompt or an artefact. *See also* **prepared improvisation**.

in role. Acting a part. *See also* **role playing**.

inner and outer circle. A convention used for ensemble sharing of contrasting perspectives related to a drama. Students gather in two circles: an inner circle representing one character in the drama and an outer circle representing a second character. (1) *In role*: Students as characters describe their reactions and state of mind at a particular point in the drama. (2) *Out of role*: Students share personal reflections with one another as they are given prompts. Students may speak spontaneously or read from a short passage. Typically, the teacher orchestrates the sharing (e.g., by tapping a student on the shoulder when it is that student's turn to speak), so that the contrasting points of view are highlighted for dramatic effect.



interpretation. (1) The process of making meaning from stories, images, and poetry and the use of drama conventions to represent or communicate that meaning to others. Students can also interpret drama works that they view at the theatre and on television.

interviewing. A convention in which a person or group in the role of "interviewer" asks questions of a student in the role of "expert" to gain information about a particular dramatic situation.

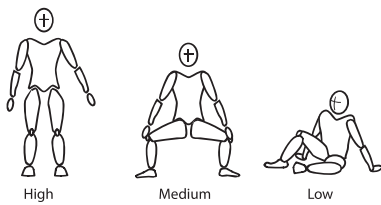
invented notation. A form of "picture writing" that students can use in a drama context to explore movement and ideas for drama (e.g., diagrams of blocking to plan movement; symbols to represent aspects of a myth, story, poem, or natural occurrence).



journal writing. A means for students to reflect on drama experiences, out of role, by writing and/or drawing in a journal. The teacher may pose questions to guide students' thinking.

juxtaposition. The contrast of strikingly different elements to create interest and tension (e.g., differences between characters, settings, moods, the use of space, or the pace of scenes).

level. A term used to refer to the position of an actor's body in relation to the vertical. Standing represents a high level, sitting or bending over a medium level, and lying down or crawling a low level.



mantle of the expert. A convention in which students act in role as “experts” to resolve a problem or challenge. The teacher may also participate, in the role of facilitator.

mapping. A convention in which students make maps or diagrams in order to establish the context, build belief in the fictional setting, or reflect on the drama.

meaning. (1) The intended message expressed by an actor or by a drama work. (2) A viewer or listener's understanding of the message of a drama work.

meetings. A convention in which students and teacher come together in role to hear new information, make decisions, and plan actions or strategies to resolve problems that have emerged in a drama.

mime. The use of gesture, movement, and facial expression without words or sounds to communicate actions, character, relationships, or emotion.

mirroring. A spontaneous improvisational drama structure used to help students explore characters, themes, issues, or ideas through

movement. Students stand face to face and move their bodies to follow their partner's movements. Variations include a group following a leader's body and/or hand movements.



monologue. A long speech by one character in a drama, intended to provide insight into the character.

mood. See **atmosphere**.

narration. A convention in which a speaker describes the action that is occurring in a drama.

out of role. Not acting a part. The term may be used to refer to discussions that take place out of character to further the drama or to plan or discuss artistic choices.

overheard conversations. A convention in which the students, role playing in small groups, “listen in” on what is being said by different characters in the drama. A signal is given to freeze all the groups. Then each group in turn is “brought to life” to continue its improvisation while the other groups watch and listen.

performance. The presentation of a drama work to an audience.

picture making. An activity in which students respond to the drama experience by creating pictures about it, either independently or in groups. The pictures could represent something needed for the drama (e.g., the bridge that connects the two communities on either side of the river).

place mat. An activity used to generate ideas. Students record ideas on a piece of paper divided into sections, with a square or circle at the centre representing “common ground”. The students generate ideas individually and group ideas they agree on in the “common ground” at the centre.

play. A drama work to be read, performed on stage, or broadcast.

plot. The sequence of events in a narrative or drama. The sequence can be chronological or presented in a series of flashbacks, flash forwards, and vignettes.

prepared improvisation. Improvised enactments of key moments that are central to a drama. Like tableau work – and unlike ordinary improvisations – prepared improvisations require planning and collaboration. Advance preparation includes identifying a suitably significant moment and giving thought to the type of dialogue that would be appropriate in the scene. Limiting the scene to two minutes helps students restrict their scenes to what is essential.

presentation. The performance of a dramatic work for an audience.

process drama. Unscripted and improvised drama activities. Role play is a key component of process drama, and the activities are intended to promote learning, inquiry, or discovery rather than to create drama for presentation to an audience. The focus is on the exploration and investigation of human dilemmas, challenges, and relationships. *See also* **shared drama experience; role playing.**

prop. A portable object used in a drama to support the action or to give authenticity to the setting.

protagonist. The main character in a play.

questioning. A strategy used to develop students' awareness of universal themes and concepts in the drama that go beyond the basic story line. The teacher asks different types of questions, both in and out of role, to help students broaden their focus. Questions may be designed to elicit information, shape understanding, or stimulate reflection, and may be introduced at any time during the lesson.

reader's theatre. A theatre genre in which students: (a) adopt the roles of different characters and of a narrator to read a text; or (b) develop scripts based on familiar texts, practise their parts, and present their rehearsed reading to others. Reader's theatre does not involve costumes, sets, props, or movement. The readers generally stand while reading, using their voices to bring the action of the scene to life.

role on the wall. A convention in which students represent an important role in picture form "on the wall" (usually on a large sheet of paper) so that information about the role can be collectively referred to or added as the drama progresses. Information may include: the character's inner qualities and external appearance; the community's and/or the family's opinions about the character; the character's view of him or herself; the external and internal forces working for and against the character; known and possible hidden influences on the action or character.

role playing/role play. An instructional technique in which a student and/or the teacher acts the part of a character in an imagined situation, usually in order to explore the character's thoughts, feelings, and values. *See also* **group role play; writing in role.**

scene. A unit of a play in which the setting is fixed and the time is continuous.

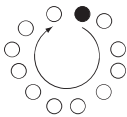
Seven Grandfather Teachings. Traditional First Nation teachings about values: honesty – *gwekwaadziwin*; humility – *dbaadendizwin*; truth – *debwewin*; wisdom – *nbaakaawin*; love – *zaagidwin*; respect – *mnaadendmowin*; bravery – *aakdehewin*.

shared drama experience. A collaborative classroom exploration of a topic, theme, or issue, using role play and a number of drama conventions to examine multiple perspectives and deepen understanding of the topic, theme, or issue. *See also* **process drama; role playing.**

side coaching. A non-disruptive instructional technique used by the teacher to help students working on an exercise or improvisation. As an onlooker, the teacher quietly makes suggestions that the students can use as they develop and shape their drama.

simulation. A re-creation of a series of events from real life. Students are assigned roles and provided with background information to help them re-enact the real-life situation. Students work in role in groups to plan their contribution, then negotiate as a class to create a joint product.

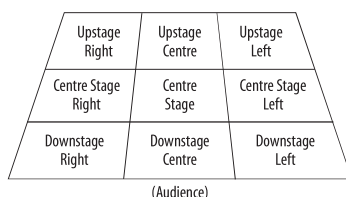
sound and gesture circle. A group activity in which each student communicates his or her interpretation of an image, concept, or word, using sound accompanied by a gesture. The other students respond as a group by repeating the sound and gesture.



soundscapes/sound collage. A combination of sounds used to create an atmosphere or to enhance important moments of a scene. Students work as a group to agree on and produce the desired sound effects, using voice and/or instruments. This strategy requires careful listening as well as group cooperation and sensitivity.

source. A text, idea, or event that provides the basis for a drama.

stage areas. Nine identified sections of the stage, used to help clarify the positions and movements of the actors in stage directions and during rehearsals and performances. The divisions are shown in the diagram below:



storytelling. A convention in which storytelling is applied in a drama context. An account of imagined or real people and events is presented through action, dialogue, and/or narration by a teacher or student narrator or by characters within the drama. Storytelling may be done in small groups, large groups, or with the whole class.

stranger in role. A convention in which a stranger is introduced into the drama at key moments to refocus the action and/or give it a new direction.

style. (1) A particular type of drama within a broader dramatic category (e.g., *commedia dell'arte* is a type or style of mask comedy). (2) A distinct manner of presenting drama, often associated with a particular historical period, movement, writer, or performer.

sustaining belief. Accepting the fictional context of the drama; believing in the imagined world of the drama and thereby convincing the audience of the authenticity of the drama.

tableau. A group of silent, motionless figures used to represent a scene, theme, or abstract idea (e.g., peace, joy), or an important moment in a narrative. Tableaux may be presented as stand-alone images to communicate one specific message or may be used to achieve particular effects in a longer drama work. Important features of a tableau include character, space, gesture, facial expressions, and levels.

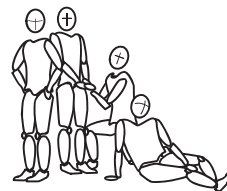


tableau cross-over. A convention in which groups of students form tableaux, after which each student exchanges his or her original tableau position for the position of a partner in the other group's tableau. The convention

is used to help students contrast two different but important moments or ideas in a drama (e.g., the effects of a sandstorm on a village years ago before there were trees versus the effects of a sandstorm on the village today). Each tableau should depict a powerful image (e.g., the worst moment during or after the storm).

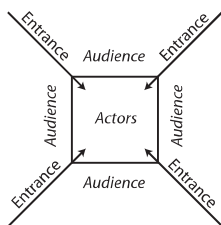
talking stick. A drama strategy named after a ceremonial artefact used in many cultures (e.g., Aboriginal) to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. In Aboriginal tradition, a stick decorated with eagle feathers and crystals was held by a speaker to show that he or she had the right to speak without being interrupted. In drama activities, a stick or other object passed among students can be used to give everyone a turn to speak.

teacher in role. A teaching strategy in which the teacher provides input into a drama activity by taking a role in the drama instead of commenting from outside the process.

technology. In drama, machinery, including electrical or digital equipment, that is used to help implement or enhance a drama production (e.g., lighting equipment, sound equipment, recording equipment, projector).

text. A spoken, written, or media work that communicates meaning to an audience.

theatre in the round/arena stage. A type of stage situated in the centre of the space, with the audience facing it from all sides. The placement of the audience quite close to the action creates a feeling of intimacy and involvement.



theatre work. A staged drama presentation for viewing, or a script for reading.

think-pair-share. A learning strategy in which a student thinks about a topic or idea, works on it with a partner, and then shares the result with the whole group.

thought tracking. A strategy in which the teacher circulates, tapping students on the shoulder to prompt them to focus on their inner thoughts and feelings. Thought tracking helps students in role to tap into thoughts and emotions that lie beneath the surface, enabling them to deepen their response and/or contrast outer appearance with inner experience. The strategy can be used effectively with students in tableaux.

tools. Equipment (including skills and abilities) used to produce and enhance a drama production. An actor's tools may include vocal skills, movement skills, imagination, and empathy. A director's or producer's tools may include props, costumes, sets, make-up, and special effects.

turning-on-stage procedure. A customary practice that calls for an actor to face the audience when turning on stage.

two stars and a wish. A method of responding to one's own or another's work by identifying two strengths and one area for improvement (e.g., "I really like... I really like... I wish...").

visual aids. Pictures, projections, or objects used to enhance drama performances.

visual arts extension. A strategy in which the teacher has students use visual arts to explore drama themes or issues. A visual arts extension should include skill/concept building in both drama and visual arts. Sometimes the created artefact can help provide context for a drama (e.g., masks, murals, books, sets, portraits).

voice. The distinctive style of expression of a character, an author, or an individual work conveyed through such things as the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and imagery, as well as rhythm and pace of speech and tone of voice.

voices in the head. A convention used to deepen students' understanding of a conflict or a difficult choice facing a character in the drama. The student representing the character remains silent while others standing behind speak out to express the thoughts and feelings the character might be experiencing at this point. *See also* **corridor of voices.**

wave. An improvisational convention in which students stand in a circle or walk in a line, shoulder to shoulder, following a leader, and spontaneously or sequentially drop out of the line to create poses to mirror and then modify an aspect of the shape and/or movement. The shapes can reflect the themes, issues, ideas, or characters being explored.

writing in role. Writing done from the point of view of a character in a drama in order to deepen the writer's understanding of the character and create or develop scenes that reflect this understanding. Some examples of forms that may be used include diaries, letters, and reports on specific events that indicate the character's responses to those events.