

Using written texts

Sometimes a drama class begins with a close examination of a written text. The literacy levels in the class will partly determine the choice of text type, and how it is used. In Early Stage 1 the class may begin with the spoken word, (for example the reading of a picture book or nursery rhyme) whilst older more experienced students could base their drama on poems, short stories or extracts from the newspaper. Picture books, where communication depends on the combination of picture and words, may be used in younger classes. In Stage 3 a playscript might be explored.

	Letters, Journals, lists and posters.
Early Stage 1	<p>Create a short letter asking for help by a well known character from a story e.g.</p> <p><i>Dear Detectives</i> <i>My little girl is missing. She went into the woods to take some food to my mother.</i> <i>She was wearing a red cloak. Can you help me?</i> <i>Mrs Hood</i></p> <p>Students, in role as the detectives, hot seat the teacher as Mrs Hood, and elicit help from them. What could have happened? How can the child be saved?</p>
Stage 1	<p>Create a shopping list for a birthday party. The class decides whose party it is, and how they could prepare for it. Do this in several stages: (i) decide on a present, and draw it (ii) in pairs, practice receiving the gifts (iii) Sit at the party table and mime serving and eating food suggested by the group.</p>
Stage 2	<p>Read <i>Where the Wild Things Are</i> by Maurice Sendak. In pairs the students draw what they think the wild thing looks like. Show and discuss these and choose one. Attach this to a poster drawn up by the teacher: "Wanted. Reward for the capture of the Wild Thing". Ask for suggestions about how to hunt for the Wild Thing. Implement some, moving around the room. Capture the Wild Thing (another teacher or child) and discuss what to do with it.</p> <p>Should it be released?</p>
Stage 3	<p>Create an "old" journal page and a map from a group of explorers lost in the Australian outback. <i>Thursday 15th January 1840. There is little hope</i></p>

we will survive. We have no more water, and the horses escaped last night. Michael has not returned from his scouting expedition.

Discuss what the students know about the early explorers. Supplement this with some resources. In small groups create three depictions of crucial moments in the explorations e.g. planning, losing the way, breaking up the party. Tap in and hear the difficulties at each stage. Follow with a whole class in role discussion, with teacher in a high status role, planning a search and rescue mission. Should it be done?