

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.

	Random words and noises.
Early Stage 1	<p>Students recall sounds they might hear at the beach. Cue these with questions. <i>What do the waves do?</i> <i>What sound do we hear when we walk on the sand?</i> With the sounds, create a spontaneous narrative by adding some characters, stringing their words together, and have the whole group enact “their” story with you. (e.g. one morning a family woke up early to the sound of the crashing waves. They put on their clothes, picked up their bucket and spade, and went for a walk on the burning sand.</p>
Stage 1	<p>Stand the students in a circle. Ask volunteers to give you the names of different jobs that people might do. When a job is nominated, ask students to use their bodies to show how the worker might act (e.g. police direct traffic, arrest robbers, help lost children). Once they have enacted several jobs, choose different corners of the room for different workplaces. Give small groups of students different occupations, freeze in their workplaces and "come alive" when the group or teacher visits their corner to see how they work.</p>
Stage 2	<p>Tell an “around the room” story one word at a time, to a theme the teacher nominates e.g. <i>On a deserted island</i> Each student needs to listen to hear what the others have said. Use the completed story as a starting point for small group improvisation. e.g it might be the scene before, or what happened afterward. Prepare these improvisations, use a narrator to tell the story, and illustrate it.</p>
Stage 3	<p>The students close their eyes. Create three sounds (e.g. ring a bell, slam a door, cough). Students share with a partner what the sounds made them think about, their associations (e.g. a fire alarm, choking in smoke, escaping.) They join another pair, and share the associations in a group of four. Turn some of these associations into a story, and each group act it out for the whole class.</p>