

# The show: exploring the local community

In this unit students use improvisation, movement and script to develop and present a performance about a local community event. They will make links with learning in Human Society and its Environment.

The specific sequence described here refers to a particular event, the local or regional show. The sequence can be readily adapted to other events which are relevant to particular communities.

*They will:*

- sustain and build belief in roles
- use drama elements to create effects
- show the development of movement and language skills
- form opinions about drama.

## Drama forms

- improvisation
- movement
- script.

## Resources

- props as required
- items associated with the local event being explored.

## Learning activities

### Getting started

- Discuss local community events. Identify events which could be explored through performance e.g. market days, cultural festivals, the recent opening of a local landmark or building, a local fete, senior citizens' week, etc.
- With the teacher's help students decide on the event to be explored e.g. the local show. Have students collect items associated with the event e.g. entrance tickets, toys, empty showbags, hats, photographs, newspaper clippings etc. They retell in pairs a real or imagined incident that occurred there.
- Students make a list of activities associated with the event e.g. wood chopping, parades, exhibitions, show jumping, rides, sideshows etc. In small groups students mime some action based on these. Students share these with the class. *What was happening? Who was involved? Where was the focus of the piece?*

### Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- Students decide on scenes to build into a performance. List and discuss these. In small groups they decide on the situation and roles e.g. players in pinball alley, mechanical clowns, exhibitors etc. Improvise some action. Teacher moves around groups assisting.
- Assist students to build belief and sustain roles e.g. *Who are you? Where are you? What are you doing? Why? How do we feel about the situation?* Each group improvises some more, makes changes and performs for the rest of the class.
- Discuss scenes. Decide on ways to structure these into a performance e.g. *What should happen now? What if this character did...? What if we changed...?* Explore ways to build dramatic tension by including mystery or an unexpected event.
- Develop contrast by experimenting with dark and light, sound and silence, movement and stillness etc. Note ideas as class proceeds.
- Explore ways to create and change focus in the piece e.g. in role as players at pinball alley students may use their eyes and heads in ways to focus attention on imagined equipment; in another scene students-in-role as members of the crowd may change role instantly and become the arena for dodgem cars by standing in a square. Discuss the effect of these kinds of decisions. Note other ideas.
- Brainstorm ways to link scenes e.g. a character may move from one scene to another; music may underscore the change from one scene to another etc. Try ideas and make decisions.
- Students rehearse and perform the piece which is videotaped. The teacher and students discuss the performance e.g. *What is working? What isn't working? What needs to be done? What should happen next?*



- Make final decisions. Students write the script for their parts in the play, organise props, select costumes, lighting and music. Rehearse in readiness for the final performance.
- Students perform the piece for the school audience.

### Responding

- Students write a letter to a friend from another class telling them about the performance and how it was developed over time.
- They watch the video recording of the final performance and discuss. *What worked well? How convincing were the roles? Which moments worked particularly well? Why? How effective were the costumes and lighting in telling the story? How well were the scenes linked? Was the story clear?*

### Assessment of students

- Teacher observation of students' drama work and their process of working.
- Analysis of video.
- Analysis by the teacher of students' oral and written comments, drawings and other responses to their drama work.
- Consideration of the following questions about students' learning in drama:
  - ♦ How well are they able to sustain and build belief in roles? How convincing are they? How effectively do they sustain roles while interacting with others?
  - ♦ What evidence is there that students are using drama elements to create effects as they work with others to develop drama? How was tension developed? How was mood created? How effectively are they working together?
  - ♦ What evidence is there that students are developing movement and language skills? Which particular skills were developed in this unit? How well were students able to use voice, gesture and different types of movement to communicate their ideas? Which movement and language skills need further development?
  - ♦ What opinions about drama are students forming? What other learning in drama is evident as they observe and respond to their drama and the drama of others?
- Consideration of the following questions about other learning:
  - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to the students' understanding of their local community?
  - ♦ What else are they saying as a result of this experience?

### Extension activities

- Develop a movement piece about a local community over time. With the help of the teacher, students explore roles and situations using a significant location or landmark as a focus for the piece. *How has the community changed? How is it the same?* Students use music from different eras to represent the passage of time.
- Students take the hot seat in role as local residents expressing opinions about an issue or decision affecting the community.
- Develop a reader's theatre piece around local characters and their stories. Have students take on roles of members of the community and tell stories about their lives.

