



Cultivating Creativity

Theatre games designed
for teachers and
educators

By Babbling Vagabonds and Fiona Paul



Our Story

We are a small charity based in Buxton, Derbyshire that specialises in creating original theatre shows for children, young people, and their families. We have been creating award-winning theatre shows since 2000. Our work has been performed in schools, community spaces, outdoor places, and theatre venues throughout the country to audiences in excess of 150,000.

We have 25 years experience of running creative workshops with children and families in communities and educational settings.

We approach each project as artists and scientists; with open minds and curiosity, searching for the sparks of excitement and inspiration to guide our path. We set off on each creative endeavour with a sense of adventure, without a firm picture of what the end result will look like. Our theatre making skills and expertise will help sculpt, shape, and inform the final event, whatever that may be. We aim to create work that is rooted in story; that is exciting, fun, engaging, thought provoking, and magical.

We believe in the power of story to change lives.

Fiona Paul

Fiona is an actor and drama practitioner. She has over 25 years of experience in acting, directing and teaching.

Her wealth of knowledge on the stage and in the classroom is vast. She endeavours to seek out the best from every child and understands how to plan and deliver a variety of drama workshops.





How To Use This Booklet

- This booklet is divided into sections each focusing on a different theatre skill
- Games will have a clear title and a brief description with easy to follow instructions
- Remember it's fun, you are experimenting,

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Starting A Session

It's important to create a safe space for students to explore ideas and develop their imaginative skills. If they feel supported they are more likely to share thoughts and work collaboratively with others in the room.

A supported environment can lead to greater confidence in students. If they are relaxed and happy they become a more effective learner.

It is important that there are clear guidelines for everyone to follow. There must be respect for other people's ideas so the encouragement of active listening is important so that every voice can be heard



Warm Up And Focus

The following games have many benefits and it's not just getting the body warm and moving. Incorporating these types of games can improve the overall effectiveness of the session.

They get students physically ready and mentally prepared whilst fostering a sense of playfulness, enabling confidence building and freedom of expression.



Warm Up & Focus

Stop and Go

Children run when you say Go and stop on Stop. They can stop in character or you can ask that they stop and look at you wherever you are in the room and have both feet on the floor. You then ask that they ignore you when you say Stop and replace it with one clap, then ask that they ignore you when you say Go and replace it with two claps. Try to confuse them. Good for listening, energising and finding focus and holding energy in a moment of excitement.

Name Tag

Like TAG, but you can save yourself by saying someone else's name just before they TAG you. The person who is on must have their hand up and if you are tagged you lose a life (1-3 lives) when all lives gone make a wall so that the space keeps getting smaller.

Pulse

Stand in a circle holding hands. The group have to send a pulse around the circle by squeezing the hand of the person next to them as quickly as possible. Time how long it takes for the pulse to make a full circle. Challenge them see how fast they do it.

Clapping Game

In a circle children clap their own hands together and then clap the child's hand either side of them. (Like patacake sideways). The leader calls a number and that is how many claps you do to the side, only ever one clap to the middle.

Leading with Eyes Shut

Pair up the children. One person leads the other around the room with their eyes shut. They must do this slowly and talk to their partner by giving instructions e.g take two steps forward, step to your left etc..and describe where possible all that they see.

Voice And Movement

Warming up the body is important and so to is warming up the voice. The voice is like an instrument and plays a key role in our ability to be heard. These chosen exercises make warming up the muscles fun and can prevent injury, improve range and reduce tension. Voice warm ups can improve diction and greater vocal ability.



Voice & Movement

Cat Climbs The Tree

Everyone pretends to be a cat. They then climb up the tree (everyone does this on the spot) and each step goes along a musical scale. Meow as you go up and down the scale. You can vary the speed from slow to fast and you can jump the height of the tree and around the scale or head to the top of the tree and jump the octave, or get stuck in one place on the same note.

Voice Orchestra

Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different sound. eg. whoosh, buzz, ting, bloop etc... Then conduct the groups like an orchestra pointing to them to create a funny symphony. You could always give the children a turn in being the conductor.

Mirror Mirror

Pair up the children. One of them is the leader the other is the mirror. The leader must move slowly and the person being the mirror must copy the movements as closely as possible. The aim of the game is for an onlooker not to realise who is the leader and who is copying. The leader is not trying to trick the other person. These are slow deliberate movements. Switch roles after a few minutes.

Who Are We Copying?

Make a circle with the children. one child is chosen to go into the centre and close their eyes. Choose one person from the circle that everyone must copy the movements of. The child in the middle has 3 guesses to figure out who everyone is copying.

Tongue exercises

These quick exercises of the mouth and tongue will aid in greater flexibility and release any tension.

Pretend you are chewing a very sticky toffee. Really work the whole mouth and tongue.

Make circles with your tongue around the inside of your mouth. Trace your top and bottom lips to create big circles. Try 10 in one direction and then 10 in the opposite direction. Then go again going as fast as you can. You will suddenly realise how much tension is in your tongue and jaw!

Make a face like you have sucked a lemon. Make your face tight for a few seconds. Then release the muscles and make a face as big as possible with your tongue out. Repeat a few times.

Walk Like An Animal

Call out an animal. The children must move around the space being that animal.

Communication

Students can develop their communication skills by playing the following speaking and listening games.

These games can help improve self awareness and the understanding of others. They can improve comprehension and retention of information along with enhancing overall communication skills.



Communication

News Balloon

Blow Up a Balloon and pass it around the circle without doing it up. Each child must hold on to the balloon and give a piece of news. You introduce each child with a silly song whilst beating the rhythm on your legs and ending with a clap.

Da, da, da, da, da ,da Da.

Eg 'I am going to a party on Saturday'

You can only speak when you have the balloon. The children learn to listen and concentrate as they are worried about the air coming out of the balloon.

Telephone Call

Put the children into pairs and get them to sit back to back. They can then take it in turns to have a conversation about a certain subject area/theme that you have given them. This requires attentive listening

Lost In Translation

Pair up the children. One child speaks nonsense (made up words that don't mean anything). The key here is for them to use expressive body language and facial expressions to convey what they are talking about. The other child must act as a translator interpreting what they think the other might be saying. They can look at the other child's body language and hand gestures as clues.

Giving a present

Sit in a circle. Person A gives person B a present. Person B opens the present and leads the scene.

B Thank you for the..... (they can make it up and mime it) spider.

A That's OK, I found him in the rare pets store, apparently he eats finger nails.'

B Well that is perfect because my finger nails need cutting.

The idea is to try to create a scene together.

Describing Pictures

The teacher draws a simple picture that the children can't see and then they describe it to the children slowly and with detail. The children try and draw exactly what the teacher has drawn.

eg "In the middle of my page there is a big circle. At the edge of the circle there are 10 triangles, evenly space with the point facing outwards."

It should reveal a sunshine.

Pictures can get increasingly complicated and children can take the role of describing the picture.

Box of Tricks

An imaginary box is passed around the circle. When it is passed to you, you must open it and pretend to take something out. It can be amazing or totally ordinary, try and act out your mime and then pass the box along.

Storymaking

Imagination and curiosity are among the qualities needed for an avid learner. Stories help us make sense of the world and are part of the fabric in every community. Making up or telling stories fosters empathy and develops emotional intelligence. It also strengthens memory, improves your ability to retain information and allows for innovative thinking.



Storymaking

Fortunately, Unfortunately.

This game can be played as a class, in groups or in pairs. The players take it in turn to tell the next part of the story using one sentence. Use a simple one line story starter like "One hot day Sam wanted an ice cream."

The next person has to start their line with "Fortunately".

"Fortunately Sam had enough money in his pocket." The next person has to start their line with "Unfortunately".

"Unfortunately the ice cream shop was shut" Keep alternating with the sentence starting with fortunately and unfortunately until the story comes to a natural end.

Story Prompts

Story prompts can offer a fun way to jump start ideas sparking an individuals imagination. Interesting prompts can be linked to a topic and engage reluctant writers or those who struggle with a blank page.

Story prompts can be a short sentence or pose different questions:

You discover a big heavy key. What is it for?

You are training as a witch or wizard and have to make a special potion for your teacher. What does your potion do? What do you need to put in it? How do you make it? Does your teacher drink it? What happens next? Does your teacher give you a gold star, or a time out?

One Word Stories

This is a fun and challenging way to make up a story. Each person can only say one word to move the story on. Encourage them to use descriptive words too.

One Sentence Story

Begin with an opening sentence, eg; "Once upon a time there lived a fierce dragon." Pupils take it in turns to make up a sentence of the story. The sentence must logically follow the previous one ensuring the story remains connected.

Magic Mirror, Magic Door

Using the word magic automatically conjures a world unlike our own. Get the students to imagine what they see through a magic mirror or through a magic door.

Babbling Vagabonds Quest Story Plan

Use these nine pointers to create your own adventure story.

1. Place/Character

Where does the story start?

Who lives there? What's life like there?

2. Threat/Problem

What happens to disrupt the routine?

This is where we usually meet the villain

3. Plan

How are the characters going to solve the problem/get rid of the threat?

4. Who can do it? The Hero

Who can solve the problem?

Doesn't always have to be human.

What are they good at?

What are their weaknesses?

5. Useful stuff

Objects, sometimes magical, often appear useless, but the hero takes these items on their quest.

We won't know their usefulness until later.

6. Journey

The need to get to where the problem lies.

What obstacles do they end up facing?

e.g. a spooky forest, a wild sea etc...

Who or what do they meet and how do they test or help the hero?

7. The Test

At some point in the journey the Hero meets a test or a trial.

It could be a grumpy, hungry ogre, a shark infested sea, etc...something that wants to eat them.

Is there an unusual way in which the Useful Stuff, object(s) they have taken with them could be used?

8. Face To Face

The hero confronts the threat/problem. The hero could use something they found on the way or taken with them (an object, gift, tool, or even a lesson learnt). Useful Stuff.

The hero could also use kindness, intelligence, or strength to outsmart the villain.

9. Outcome

How does it end?

What has the hero done to save the day?

What happens when the Hero returns home?

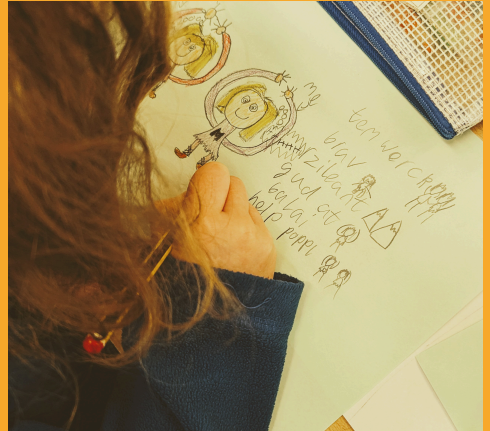
Do things go back to normal, or are things changed for good?

Closing A Session

Reflection

Within in our practise we feel it is important to gather feedback from participants and reflect on the learning to measure progress and development. There are a few ways in which we do this and they are often simple exercises that can be built into a session plan.

These insights can help us assess our learning as practitioners too. Regular evaluation means that workshops are impactful and meeting the needs of everyone involved.



Evaluation Exercises

The Interview

Pair up the children and get one child to be the Journalist and the other to be the interviewee.

The journalist then asks questions about what they learned or experienced in the workshop to the interviewee.

Switch roles so each child gets a chance to play both roles.

The Buzz

Make a circle with all children. They each take it in turns to feedback what they thought of the session. What they enjoyed, learnt or found difficult. No one is allowed to speak except the person who has the "Buzz" The "Buzz" is passed onto the next person in the circle when they have finished talking. The end their turn by saying "Buzz".

The Take Away

Give the children a piece of paper. Get them to draw or write about their experience. Give them prompts like:

What are they proud of?"

Today I learnt/enjoyed /
I found it difficult when.....

When they have finished get them to put their work in a sparkly envelope that you can then take away.

Stars and Wishes

Using sticky notes or bits of paper get the children to write down positive things about the session (The Stars)

Then get the children to write down anything they would improve or change from the session. (The Wishes)

There can then be a class discussion about what they have written.



The Power of Play and Storytelling

We believe in the power of play and storytelling. Imagination and curiosity are two very important assets in life's toolkit.

Stories help us make sense of the world we live in and they help us remember who we are and where we are from.

Play stimulates creativity and emotional development. In collaborative situations it teaches the importance of working together and sharing ideas. It can boost confidence and provide opportunities for learning new concepts and skills.





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Outdoor adventure theatre
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www.babblingvagabonds.co.uk



Babbling Vagabonds Storytelling Theatre



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