

## Introduction

When we look at the practicalities of teaching drama, what is important is developing a style that is flexible enough to accommodate the abilities, gender and size of the group being taught. *Themes for Drama* will encourage a way of teaching where the teacher openly shares the process with the students. In turn, the students will be able to see in clearer terms the purpose of the drama work.

There is no great mystique to teaching drama. There are skills involved, but underpinning these is simple presentation of interesting and relevant material in an organised way. *Themes for Drama* contains a series of ideas within a workable framework in order to give good examples and an outline for good practice.

The three themes included in this pack are:

- Battle Cries – A look at why man fights, the preparation, battle and effects that ensue
- The Face in the Mirror – A look at how important image is to us
- Tinsel Truths – Considers the hidden values in movies.

Each theme is a logically written and diagrammatic outline of a unit of work. Each unit is divided into eight one-hour sessions.

The themes are essentially improvisation-based and encourage discussion and reflection. Each session builds up information for the student, leads them to consolidate their information and finally helps them clarify in their own minds the issues raised.

The themes are not just a series of ‘off the peg’ sessions; they show in a clear and uncluttered fashion how to structure a drama session. They make explicit the content of the session and introduce concepts and ideas that are transferable to other areas of the curriculum – ideal stimuli for cross-curricular work.

### How to use the pack

Each worksheet provides material for a one-hour session and is designed so that the student has full access to the material. Each student should receive a copy of the worksheet.

Each sheet is split into three parts:






- The drama activity
- Words and questions to provoke discussion
- A space for notes.

Column one – The drama activity

Simply either follow or relate the instructions.

Most of the activities revolve around immediate role-play; this is denoted by the word ‘Cue’. The teacher may wish to state the word ‘positions’ to warn students that their role-play is ready to commence and the word ‘cue’ to begin the role-play. Preparation for the roles will vary, but in the main the role-play can commence as soon as the students have the necessary

## 7 Returning home after war

	Drama activity	Discussion	Notes
 <p>Returning</p>	<p>Whole group</p> <p>The war is over. You pack your kit and talk with you fellow soldiers about going home.</p> <p>You write a postcard to tell your family you will be arriving home in two days.</p> <p>Cue:</p>	<p>Memories of home.</p> <p>What are you looking forward to?</p> <p>What do you want to forget?</p>	
 <p>The homecoming</p>	<p>Group work</p> <p>To A: Your brother/sister has been killed in the war. You have to tell your family.</p> <p>To B: You are family and friends. You have arranged a homecoming party. You are expecting both soldiers.</p> <p>Cue:</p>	<p>Grief.</p> <p>Sorrow.</p> <p>Regret.</p> <p>Refusing to accept the truth.</p>	
 <p>The news</p>	<p>Group work</p> <p>Consider presenting a freeze-frame from the role-play when the tragic news has been broken.</p> <p>Perhaps each student could state the thoughts in their head.</p>		
 <p>Fitting in again</p>	<p>Pair work</p> <p>To A: You are going to ask the boss of the firm where you used to work before the war for your job back.</p> <p>To B: You will interview A. Their job has been taken by someone else but another job, not so prestigious or as well paid, is available.</p> <p>Cue:</p>	<p>Who deserves what?</p> <p>Loyalty.</p> <p>Companies have to continue.</p> <p>Jobs need to be filled.</p>	
 <p>Prepare and share</p>	<p>Pair work</p> <p>Focus in on a brief extract. Present this to the rest of the group.</p>		

### 3 Changing how you look

#### Drama activity

#### Discussion

#### Notes

What would I change?

Solo/group work  
 If you could change your physical appearance in one or more ways, what changes would you want to make and why? Examples include: nose, eyes, height, feet, ears, lips, jaw line, knees, hands, fingers, nails and cheeks.  
 Do you want to look like anyone?

What difference do you think these changes will make:

- to you?
- to your friends?

Confiding

Pair work  
 You have decided to change your physical appearance in some way. You decide to tell your best friend.

Cue:

Pair work

Reverse the roles. Your friend now tells you how they would change their physical appearance.

Cue:

How do you feel about telling your friend?  
 Apprehensive?  
 Confident?  
 What are your friend's attitudes when they are informed?

Confiding

Group work  
 Take on a role in a group of friends. Establish the venue. One member of the group has decided that they are going to have a feature of their physical appearance changed. In the course of the evening they inform their friends of this.

Cue:

Discuss the attitude of the friends towards the situation.

How do you present yourself?  
 What is your friend's reaction?

Reaction to the change

Pair work  
 You have had the plastic surgery. Your best friend comes to visit you for the first time since the change.

Cue:

## The Face in the Mirror 1-3

As an introduction the group could discuss 'first dates' in general. What attracts one person to another? Give examples of first date experiences. Compare different views and expectations, both male and female. The discussion should be as a whole group.

Give each pair some time to decide what particular aspect of appearance the parent or guardian is going to object to, and then as individuals allow some time to decide upon how they are going to express their thoughts and opinions.

Before the improvisation, prompt the group to consider some problems of a first date. Where to go? What to talk about? When to hold hands? When to kiss?

After the improvisation discuss the advice given. View some of the improvisations that show good/bad/indifferent advice. Will the advice be acted upon?

Discuss venues for the first date. Stress that the freeze-frames should not be over the top. It is only a first date! Students may wish to try out some freeze-frames first, eg initial meeting one hour after the beginning of the date. The groups could also add dialogue to a particular freeze-frame to illustrate a particular point, eg I do like them, this is not going to work, can I see you again?

Discuss with the group how much body language communicates meaning. Give examples, eg arms folded tightly when sitting down, sitting in a relaxed, laid-back manner. Spend time considering the examples.

The whole group are in the disco dancing in pairs/groups/on their own. Ask the students to think carefully about their brief role. It is not necessary to dance.

These two exercises are intended to break down any inhibitions the group may have regarding the next task of the 'chat up'. It also encourages the group to interact. The group should be told to concentrate on creating the right mood/atmosphere by not being flippant or destructive. They must work together as a group. It is important you maintain control in these exercises.

Before the group begin to improvise, allow time for the students to decide upon role and venues. For example, is the meeting by chance or by design; in a pub, club or at school? You should stress that the two pairs have never met before. Encourage the pairs to try out different strategies if a particular strategy does not work.

After the improvisations, discuss the differences in the approach between the boys and the girls. Analyse the different strategies used. When choosing an extract to present to the rest of the group, encourage the student to choose pertinent extracts that reflect the discussion of the improvisations and that crystallise the points made in the discussion.

At first the students should sit in a space by themselves.

This exercise is not meant to be part of a group discussion (students would not be expected to discuss their personal appearance with the whole group). Once they have decided on what aspect they would change, they may wish to discuss it in small groups of three, four or five. For the sake of the exercise presume that the changes could be made on the National Health Service.

Stress to the students that they are going to be telling their best friends. What is a best friend? Discuss this with the group before the exercise begins.

When reversing the roles it is important that time is given to the students to prepare anew. It should not just be a repetition of the first improvisation. The reason for reversing the roles is to allow both students to experience the apprehension, embarrassment, confidence, etc.

Allow as much time as necessary to decide upon roles and venue and establish the role-play. Prompt the students to consider the group of friends and their relationships. Have they known each other a long time? Are they friends from school? A club? Work? It is better to work in mixed gender groups? Are the group meeting for a special reason? Some kind of celebration? An anniversary? To plan a holiday? This will affect the venue perhaps. It may be necessary to try some freeze-frames to help establish the roles, eg:

FREEZE 1 What were you doing one hour before the meeting?

FREEZE 2 What were you doing four hours before the meeting?

During the improvisations it is useful to freeze the action and ask the students to state the thoughts in their heads. After the improvisations discuss how the evening and the friend's visit went.