

The drama process

	Sensitivity	Creativity	Communication
Content	Sensitivity towards the issues raised by the drama	Creative thinking in response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the drama content ▪ developing ideas ▪ seeing ideas through 	Communicating ideas raised by the drama content
Drama skills and techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using and selecting appropriate drama form in a sensitive way ▪ Appreciation of drama form 	Creative thinking in relation to the use of drama form	Communicating ideas through use of the drama form
Personal and social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working as a team member and/or leading ▪ Responding in a sensitive way to others in the team ▪ Appreciation of the personal and social skills of others 	Developing creative ways of leading and collaborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicating with others involved in the drama work ▪ Developing language skills

3 Drama techniques

The drama techniques make the drama form. This is the way of presenting the drama work that you or your teacher chooses. As you become familiar with the techniques, you will be able to use them to explore or enhance your own work. The various techniques provide tools to develop ideas, characters and plots. They build the drama and help you to understand the content and issues raised. It is important to have a good understanding of the techniques when writing about your drama work.



The techniques can be broken down into three main areas:

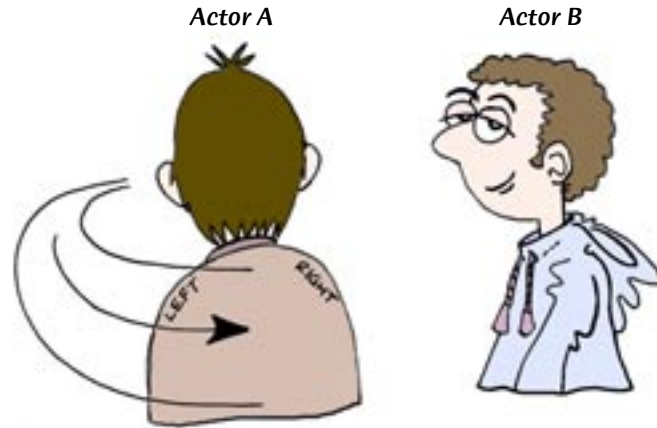
- Basic role-play techniques (pages 12 to 20)
- Basic improvisation techniques (pages 21 to 31)
- Presentation skills (pages 32 to 43).

Most of the definitions are accompanied by a cartoon to help you to remember the technique. A checklist is provided on page 44 so that you can keep a record of the techniques you have used.

Turning through the audience

When turning to face another actor in the acting area, try to make the turn bigger by turning through the longest way.

For example, actor A, who is facing upstage, has to turn to actor B:



Actor A should turn through 270° by:

- 1 turning away from actor B so that his left shoulder is downstage
- 2 then facing directly downstage
- 3 turning to actor B so that his right shoulder is downstage.

The three stages are all one continuous action. It allows the audience to see more of the actor's face as he turns. This is useful if it is important for the audience to be aware of a character's thoughts as they turn.

Slow motion

During part of a presented improvisation, the action is deliberately slowed. Often this is used to focus on a particular part of the improvisation.

Sometimes scenes showing events such as fights or races are shown in slow motion for greater visual impact.



Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of abstract form – using gestures, movement or words to represent the content of the drama.

When a piece is symbolic or abstract it does not look realistic. For example, if we want to symbolise pressure on teenagers, we might stand one person centre stage. The other students from the group might stand on higher levels

and point at the teenager. Each person may repeat one or two words to represent pressure. One person might say 'No money', someone else 'Girlfriend', another 'Work', and so on. As the words are repeated, they become like a chant. The teenager eventually curls up into a ball.



Sound collage

In sound collage, different sounds are created with voice or instruments that overlap to make a dramatic effect.

Sound collage is a useful way of creating variations in the sounds that the audience hears. For example, the sounds created by the actors surrounding the man taking his driving test symbolise different sounds that may be going round in his head. The repetition of the sounds helps to create for the audience the confusion and stress that the driver feels. The example given in the definition of symbolism also shows the use of sound collage.



Getting the best from your voice

To help with the pace of your piece, try the following exercises:

Picking up cues

Pick a short extract from your presentation. With a partner, go over the dialogue, overlapping cues – this is where the first word of the next speaker's sentence overlaps the last word of the last speaker's sentence.

Pause

Choose another short extract of about six lines. Identify where pauses might be effective. For example, in the dialogue used below there may be a pause before the teacher's sentence, 'It's possible'.

Teacher: The rehearsal begins at 5 o'clock.

Student: Will it finish before six?

Teacher: It's possible.

Clarity and pace

If the pace of the dialogue sounds right in the rehearsal then you are probably talking too fast. Try and listen to yourself as you speak. It will help to slow you down. Remember that the audience only gets to hear the line once. You could record extracts and listen to the clarity and the pace.

Volume

Check out if the performance can be clearly heard. Groups can help each other in this exercise by sitting where the audience would be. Listening as a member of the audience with eyes closed really helps focus on the volume of the piece. Do the actors use the full range of their voices?

Sound collage

Sound collage is a useful technique to add another dimension to part of the drama. Using voice overlap can build up tension, create pace and develop the drama into an abstract form. It adds interest to the drama and shows awareness of performance elements.

You may wish to make notes on page 87 on the results of these exercises. An example is given on page 86.

Costumes and key props

The use of costumes and props will help create the right mood and can confirm the period in which the improvisation is set. However, you do not want to be involved in numerous costume changes in a 20-minute improvisation. Consider the use of token costumes, eg using different hats, or something as simple as a scarf.

Any props you use should be really vital to the drama. If you are creating an improvisation, it is the characters and the plot that are important. If the improvisation is for an examination, then most examining boards have separate categories for design of costumes and props. In brief, keep everything simple and manageable.

Setting moods and establishing place

Music

Music selected for links should be reflective of past or future actions, and should underline the mood of the piece. If the presentation is only one short act then music at the beginning and ending helps set off the piece. Remember that the music should not impose too much. There should be no large sections of music with no drama taking place.

Sets

Very simplistic sets can often be as effective as elaborate ones. Simple colour backgrounds can give a unifying feel to a set of presentations. The colour(s) can also be symbolic of place or mood. For example, yellow for a beach, happiness or sunshine. The use of rostra and close lighting may be all that is needed.

Lights

Again, simplicity should be the principal consideration. The angles and intensity create different effects and, of course, the coloured gels will symbolise mood. However, remember that an examiner and the audience need to see. It is better to have too much light than not enough.