Unit One: Think Quick

In this unit we will be looking at improvisation in drama.

What is Drama?

What do you think drama is?

Use the words below to fill in the blanks.

WORDS
Roles, relationships, real, bad, reflection, ourselves, situations, actors, world

Drama is a **reflection** of our lives.

The **situation** we are involved in.

The **roles** we must play.

The **relationships** we make with others.

Drama helps us understand the **world** we live in and all that happens around us.

Drama helps us understand **ourselves** as people, why we are good or **bad**, why we love and hate.

Drama is not **real**. Drama is a story told by **actors**. We can learn a lot about real life through drama.

What is improvisation?

As a class, we are going to brainstorm what we think improvisation is. Afterwards, you are to write the ideas below.

**Acting as an Audience**

List 3 ways an audience should behave

1. **sit and face the stage**
2. **sit quietly**
3. **etc**
Situation, Roles and Relationships

In drama and improvisation, it is important for the actors on stage to set up the **situation, roles and relationships** on stage.

It is important to understand that drama comes from **real life** experiences.

Drama is a reflection of life.

### Situation

| Where the action takes place,  
| when the action takes place (time of day, period in history, past, present, future etc)  
| What has happened,  
| what is happening. |

### Roles

| Who is involved in the action  
| What is their purpose in the action |

### Relationships

| Between people, the environment, people and tasks who is more important (status) |

By developing the situation, roles and relationships you are giving the performance a CONTEXT.
Non-Contextual Scripts

A non-contextual script is a script without a context. This means you don’t know who is in it (roles and relationships) where and when it is (situation).

Read the following non-contextual script and write down 3 ideas of what you think could be happening…

Non-Contextual Script

A: Hmmm
B: What
A: That looks like….
B: Yes
A: Well you know
B: No, tell me

Idea 1
Situation:
Roles:
Relationships:

Idea 2
Situation:
Roles:
Relationships:

Idea 3
Situation:
Roles:
Relationships:

Now as a group, you are to pick one of your ideas and act it out for an audience.

Think about how you are going to make the audience aware of:

- the situation (where, when and what is going on)
- the roles
- the relationships between the characters on stage

After the performance

How was your performance? How did it feel to be on stage for the first time in front of an audience?

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Non Contextual Script #2

In pairs read through the script below. Discuss possible contexts for this script. Write your final ideas in the other box. Remember, the who, what, where and when.

A: What are you making?
B: Mind your own business.
A: That’s Amazing
B: It’s meant to be a secret.
A:
B:
A:
B:
A:
B:
A:
B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation:</th>
<th>Roles:</th>
<th>Relationships:</th>
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After the performance

How was your performance? How did you create your character? (movement, voice etc).

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Use of Stage Space

When performing on stage it is important to follow the rules below.

- **Use a loud voice so the audience can hear you**
- **Stand so the audience can see your face**
- **Don’t block other actors (stand in front of them)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>USR</th>
<th>USC</th>
<th>USL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>CS</td>
<td>LCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSR</td>
<td>DSC</td>
<td>DSL</td>
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</table>

This is always from the actors perspective.
**Place and Space**

All dramatic action occurs in **Place** and **Time**. As a creator of the dramatic action it is up to you to create the **place** where the action is set. Place can greatly affect the events and tension within the drama.

Also, different places will dictate **characters** on stage.

When developing place and space there are 4 things to consider:

Other characters: **your setting may limit, or dictate, the range of other characters you can use in your drama. It may also suggest minor characters you can bring in.**

Closed and open settings: **depending on the setting this can help establish mood.**

**Closed** – haunted house, castle – doom and gloom

**Open** – light, wide open space – happiness and freedom

Can use multiple locations – which enable us to explore many aspects of the situation.

Contrasting settings: **film often use contrast between closed and open locations to help establish mood and meaning. Characters are defined by their location.**

Message of place: **many settings carry with them very strong associations – things that we expect to happen in that place. You can also contrast expectations powerfully. This sets up a tension of surprise between what we expect and is actually happening.**

**Space**

When rehearsing a play it is important the space where the performance is to take place is considered

- **Inside**
- **Outside**
- **Theatre in the round**
- **Off the stage (off the floor)**

**Types of Stages**
**Beginning, Middle and Ending**

All performances have a beginning, middle and ending. It is important that when rehearsing your performance that you ensure that this is included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Ending</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The start of the play.</strong> Introduces the characters and the start of the tension</td>
<td><strong>The tension builds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tension is resolved in some way. Must be a clear ending.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tension**

Dramatic tension *drives* the drama. This means it helps move it forward. Without tension plays would be very boring!

- All tension must be created by a happening.
- All tension must be resolved by a happening.

There are 4 types of tension.

- Tension of Relationships
  - Intimacy, conflict, misunderstanding.

- Tension of Task
  - Time, difficulty, importance, consequences.

- Tension of Surprise
  - Expected, unexpected, shock, suspense

- Tension of Mystery
  - Secrets, discovery, the unknown truth
Language
In drama, as in real life, we express our ideas, our feelings and our needs to each other by:

- The words we say
- The way we say them
- Our body language

Together these make up the **language of drama**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMY</th>
<th>The delivery of language tells a great deal about the speakers intentions and opinions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMAGES</td>
<td>Language works best when it is used with economy – don’t say too much</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Dramatic action is made up of language and movement. Our movement creates visual images which help convey meaning</td>
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Often the way something is spoken says more than the words themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound and silences</th>
<th>Note differences in the quality of voice. Is it warm and understanding? Cold and abrupt? Aggressive and hot?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch</td>
<td>What happens when questions are asked? Demands are made? Changes in sound at the end of sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>These can help establish tension. Listen for the silences which occur. When are the pauses longest? Shortest?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intonation</td>
<td>Listen for the sounds which are stressed. How are certain sounds emphasised? When do stresses increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>Listen for variation in the height or depth of the sound. As an argument build do the voices become higher?</td>
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<td>Tone Colour</td>
<td>Listen for changes in loudness or softness. When is the voice most loud? Most soft?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>Listen for variation in the speed of delivery. When is the sound coming thick and fast? Slow and deliberate?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Movement

The way we move can help develop **Character**.

From class activities, explain how you moved to create the following characters.

Old person: ____________________________________________________________

Police Person: _________________________________________________________

Snob: ______________________________________________________________

Shy Person: __________________________________________________________

Status

Status is someone’s level of **importance**. There are three types of status:

1. **High**
2. **Equal**
3. **Lower**

There are various ways status can be developed. List below some ways discussed in class.

- **Sitting**
- **Standing**
- **Voice**
- **Props**
- **etc**
Unit Two: Think Quick

In this unit you will transform a play from the page to the stage!! This means, that you will be given a script and in small groups you will develop it into a polished performance.

What does polished performance mean?

- All lines are learnt
- Movement is clearly choreographed
- Costumes
- Props
- Music
- Lighting

Blocking

When developing a performance from a script it is important to block your script. This means writing all your movements and how you say your words on your script.

Have a go on the script below.

The Tree and The Woodcutter

Characters: Tree, Girl, Rabbit, Bird, Sun, Woodcutter, Flower, Dove
Setting: A forest, in the Spring. The tree is on stage. Very slowly the sun appears. The birds are singing. There´s a soft music in the background.

ACT I

Tree: (crying in stage)
Girl: (enters stage) Where´s my ball? This is happening to me because I disobeyed my mom.. (then she talks to the audience): Has anybody seen my ball?
Girl: (looking at the tree) What´s wrong with you? Are you crying? Who hit you? .. (then she talks to the audience): Did you hurt the tree?
Tree: Nobody hurt me, don´t worry. You are too young, you don´t understand. What´s your name?
Girl: Ana. But, tell me, what wrong with you?
Rabbit: (enters stage running) :You didn´t get me! You didn´t get me! .. (then trips with the girl and both fell to the floor)
Girl: Ouch! Watch out!
Rabbit: – Oh, I´m sorry, I´m sorry, but... what´s wrong?.. (then talks to the tree): Do you have a cold or are you crying?
**Girl and Rabbit:** Tell us!

**Tree:** A bird told me that a woodcutter is coming to cut me down.

**Rabbit:** – Are they going to cut you down? *(the dove, flower, bird enter stage and say):* To cut you down?

**Rabbit:** Where am I going to hide?

**Bird:** Where am I going to do my nest?

**Dove:** What am I going to eat?

**Flower:** Who will give me shade?

**Sun:** How sad the forest will be! We have less trees to give sunlight.

**Rabbit:** I will fight for you with my own hands *(boxing)*

**Bird:** – There he comes! There he comes, the woodcutter! Let´s get together.

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**Rehearsal Schedule**

When rehearsing a play it is important to have a rehearsal schedule. This is an important tool to help you put on a polished performance.

<table>
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You need to write in the following.

- When lines are to be learnt by
- Full dress rehearsal
- Rehearsal dates
- What will happen at rehearsals
Costumes, props, stage layout.
Now that you have read your script, you need to consider your costumes, props and stage layout.

Costumes
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________

Props
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________
• __________________________________________________________

Stage layout

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|   |   | Audience
Performance Analysis

Just like you did earlier in this booklet, the following pages are for you to analyse your performances. There are guiding questions to help you.

Performance Name: _____________________________________
Stimulus Used: _________________________________________
  • Performance Context (Situation, roles, relationships)
  ______________________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________________
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  • How did you create your character? (movement, voice etc). How did you develop tension? How was the tension resolved?
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  • What was the best moment in your performance? Why?
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  • How could you improve your improvisation for next time? (parts you would change and why?)
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