

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	6
He Said, He Means .....	7–12
<i>A Short Play for Two Girls and Two Boys</i>	
Does This Seem Fair? .....	13–16
<i>A Historical Monologue for a Girl</i>	
Cut to the Clique .....	17–26
<i>A ‘Game Show’ Short Play</i>	
Whatta Plan .....	27–28
<i>A Rap Song</i>	
I’m Really Here .....	29–32
<i>A Dramatic Monologue for a Girl</i>	
Polluters on Parade .....	33–42
<i>A ‘Talk Show’ Short Play</i>	
Cheerleader Tryouts .....	43–46
<i>A Humorous Duet for Two Girls</i>	
We Two Kings .....	47–56
<i>A Historical Duet about Coretta Scott King and Martin Luther King</i>	
The Dan and John Duet .....	57–62
<i>A Humorous Duet for Two Boys</i>	
A Mall and the Night Visitors .....	63–66
<i>A Humorous Monologue for a Girl</i>	
Love You Not Me? .....	67–76
<i>A Lighthearted but Historical Duet for a Boy and a Girl</i>	
Cinderella! .....	77–101
<i>A Full Length Play to Perform for Children</i>	
Creating Believable Characters .....	102–103

# Preface

*Real-Life Drama for Real, Live Students* is a collection of scenes and short plays for young actors. Some are serious and deal with real-life problems and decisions that face our students. Some are funny, ranging from scenes that have quick wordplay and comic timing to scenes that present current issues using broad caricatures.

Who will use *Real-Life Drama*? Teachers of drama or speech classes! Any time a student is given a scene which delights him or her, touches off a creative spark and provides lines which can be learned and delivered before the class, the student gains a little more self-confidence. Each time such a scene occurs, there is a little more communication between the student and the class or between the student and the duet partner. There are roles in these plays which will seem like family members, friends . . . like the students themselves. There is a version of 'Cinderella!' which would be a wonderful project for high school or middle school actors to present to younger students. Bus some young students to your school or go to them—and watch your own students turn into stars as they sign autographs for the younger students after the show.

Who else will use *Real-Life Drama*? Teachers of a non-drama subject, such as history, will find them useful. Your students can act out—or just read aloud—the historical scenes in this collection, such as the *real* story of Pocahontas and John Smith, presented with humorous banter that will amuse your class. Your students can meet Susan B. Anthony. And there is a scene between Dr and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr. These sketches offer a different way to present material that might seem a little dry coming straight out of a textbook.

Who else will find *Real-Life Drama* useful? Anyone concerned about the decisions and dangers that face our young people today, including physical education and health teachers, counsellors, English teachers . . . The scene 'I'm Really Here' presents a young woman who feels as if she doesn't really exist unless she has 'a boyfriend'. In a frank monologue, she makes tough choices about what this means, and she changes the direction of her life by joining in a group activity. 'The Dan and John Duet' presents two friends of different ethnic backgrounds who find that the differences in their backgrounds don't really matter. Your students need not learn lines and wear costumes to benefit from some of these scenes. Instead, you can make copies, read the scenes together and discuss them as a class. Whether the scenes and plays are used in elaborate productions with costumes and props or used to begin class discussions, your students will be sure to benefit from the communication of issues and ideas!

## Exercises to Accompany He Said, He Means

1. This short play is about communication—or, more specifically, about thinking one thing but saying something else, often something entirely different. Think of a time when you misrepresented your feelings to someone—your parents, a friend, a teacher. How did it turn out? Were feelings hurt? Was tension created that might have been avoided? Or was someone actually spared who might have been hurt if your true feelings had been revealed? Discuss your thoughts as a class.
2. It's Amy's birthday. Her husband Andrew asks her what she wants for a gift. As they are having financial trouble, she says, 'Oh, nothing'. So that's what he gets her! What did she really mean? What should she have said? What does Andrew learn from this about his wife and about being married?
3. Pair off. Create a situation such as a first date, a brother and sister sharing the television or two friends at a game or shopping together. Invent a problem for the two to solve. (Does one want to go to the movies but the other can't afford it? Is one friend jealous of how cool the other looks in her new outfit?) Improvise a scene. The first time, have the two characters deceive each other. Under no circumstances should you have them reveal their true feelings. See where this leads. Then, using the same characters in the same situation with the same conflict, improvise truthful dialogue—let them say what they really feel and see where this leads.
4. Lots of communication between humans takes place without any spoken words at all, but instead through facial expressions, hand gestures, body language. Have someone go before the class and make an announcement. ('I landed an after-school job!' or 'We're getting married' or 'I've decided to join the Army', etc.) Then, one by one, have each member of the class demonstrate his or her response to this news without saying a word, just by physical expression. You may wish to be someone other than yourself. For instance, if a student announces, 'I'm running for election!' be his wife and react to the news. See how much communication is possible without saying a word!
5. For the next few days, keep a journal of instances of communication you observe between people. Notice friends who are being very truthful with each other and notice people who are deceiving each other for some reason (such as the girl who doesn't do her homework and tries to convince the teacher it really wasn't her fault, or your brothers and sisters as they talk to your parents). Decide whether you think we are truthful most of the time—or not.

### Cast

*(in order of appearance)*

Tony	Jenna's Brain
Jenna	Tony's Brain

# He Said, He Means

## *A Short Play for Two Girls and Two Boys*

*(Tony and Jenna meet in the lunchroom. Tony has a cafeteria tray, Jenna has brought her own lunch.)*

**Tony:** Hey, Jenna.

**Jenna:** Hey, Tony.

**Tony** *(sitting down)*: How did you do on your maths test?

**Jenna** *(joining him)*: I think I did okay.

*(Enter Jenna's Brain.)*

**Jenna's Brain:** Hi, I'm Jenna's Brain. I know, you were expecting me to be a little bit more grey and wrinkled. Sorry to disappoint you. I'm not the actual brain sitting in her head protected by her skull, I'm the part that thinks one thing while she says another. Like this. Watch.

**Jenna:** Yeah, the test was pretty hard, but I think I aced it.

**Jenna's Brain:** What she means is . . . 'I know you're really smart in math, Tony and I want to impress you'.

**Tony:** It was really tough, that's true.

*(Enter Tony's Brain.)*

**Tony's Brain:** Thank you, thank you, it's me, Tony's Brain. At least what's left of Tony's brain. If he doesn't start wearing a helmet when he skates . . . anyway, allow me to interpret . . .

**Tony:** It was really hard—I hope I passed.

**Tony's Brain:** Tony knows good and well he passed with flying colors. He means, 'I know I passed with flying colors, Jenna, but I like you and I don't want you to think I'm a geek'.

**Jenna's Brain:** A geek?

**Tony's Brain:** You know, like a schoolboy. An egghead.

**Jenna's Brain:** She doesn't think that! She likes him!

**Tony's Brain:** I know that and you know that, but . . .

**Jenna** *(looking at TONY's lunch)*: What's that meat there? Looks kinda scary.

# CREATING BELIEVABLE CHARACTER

**W**hen we play a person on stage, we need to know as much as we can about this person in order to make him or her ‘come alive’ and seem real to our audience. This is much easier if we as actors know the character ‘inside out’ before attempting to portray him or her.

## Exercises

On the next page is a worksheet with many questions. Create a character and answer all of the questions about him or her. The first time through, invent a very normal, ‘everyday’ sort of person, maybe based on someone you really know. You’ll have to make up a good deal of the information, such as the character’s past and facts about his parents. It doesn’t matter if it’s factual—this information is just for you as an actor. Then do the worksheet again, this time creating a completely wild and bizarre person. Even if the character is strange and exaggerated, it’s possible to make him or her believable by knowing all there is to know about this person. Look at Jim Carey’s character in *Ace Ventura, Pet Detective*. Could he be more ‘off the wall’? And yet we believe him because he acts as if he actually is that weird character. He has no doubt thoroughly researched the character.

Now pair up and create a scene in which one of your characters and the character of one of your classmates meet. Where are they? Why have they run into each other? What problem do they have and how do they solve it? How does the scene end? Improvise some dialogue at first (that is, make it up as you go along) and then go through it again, writing down the dialogue that you liked the most. The scene need not be lengthy—just two or three minutes.

The next time you are assigned a scene from an existing play, whether you’re performing a monologue or a scene for two or more people, answer the questions on the Character Worksheet. Hang onto this worksheet—it can help you gain insight into any character you’ll be playing.

# CREATING BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS

## Worksheet

1. What is the character's name? Is it an interesting name? Has the character received any special favours because of the name? Been treated badly because of it?
2. Where was the person born? Did he or she leave home quickly? When? Why?
3. Who are the character's parents? What kind of parents were they? Did they encourage your character? Belittle him or her? Have lots of laughter in their home or run a 'tight ship'?
4. What does your character believe in or care about?
5. How unusual or ordinary is your character? What do people notice about the character when he or she enters the room?
6. Is your character married, single, divorced, bold, shy, wild, funny, etc.?
7. What does your character enjoy doing? Does he or she have hobbies?
8. How does the character dress? Trendy? Casual? Hand-me-downs? What are his or her favourite colours? Does the character have some trademark item of clothing (such as a badge or a backwards baseball cap)?
9. Is the character handsome, average, tall, short, fat? Athletic, gangly, clumsy?
10. What mannerisms does the character have? Hands move a lot? Fidgets? Always calm, no matter what is going on?
11. Is the character an achiever or 'laid back'?
12. What things has the character saved from the past? What meanings do these things have?
13. What does the character think about society?
14. What are the character's goals? What does he or she dream about?
15. What is he or she scared of?