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Introduction

Drama is humanity's oldest art form. Long before the creation of musical instruments, painting, sculpture and written literature, human beings were acting out informally or ritualistically the important events, feelings and ideas in their lives.

Drama is the child's first art. He enters the world "acting-out" his feelings and continues this instinctively to understand himself, others and his environment. His sensory perceptions and self-awareness constantly compel him to explore, experience, and experiment.

Creative Drama is concerned with "process" rather than "product." What happens to the child *as* he engages in the activity is the key. Allow the child to experiment and introduce his own ideas. Use the material in this book as a *guide* to the spontaneous, creative situation.

As the class progresses in its ability, it may wish to share its experience with another class. This should be in the nature of an informal demonstration, since there are no costumes, scenery, or props to suggest a theatrical production.

As a developmental tool, Creative Drama helps the child understand multiple facets of humanity through:

- 1. Physical Coordination and Flexibility:** The child's self-awareness involves the use of his body: He runs, leaps, jumps, touches, tastes, hears, sees and smells. If a child is healthy and physically active, he feels good about himself. This leads to feeling good about others.
- 2. Emotional Stability:** Learning about emotional capacity and self-control gives the child a sense of well-being. Literature used in Creative Drama presents many opportunities for exploring a wide range of feelings, including the negative ones. By being a mean giant or a witch, a child can legitimately exercise his own feelings.
- 3. Mental Growth:** After activities that stimulate the body and the emotions, ideas can be introduced, discussed and put into action. Creative Drama develops sequential thinking and the ability to solve problems in a social setting.
- 4. Social and Communication Skills:** Working effectively with others toward a common goal is important in all areas of life. Being able to think on one's feet and to communicate ideas to others is essential. Creative Drama enhances language development, builds vocabulary and fosters cooperation. A class working together harmoniously is quite an achievement.
- 5. Spiritual Enrichment:** Creative Drama has been called, "The Art of the Soul." Each child is a unique human being, a creative artist—if given the opportunity to develop to his fullest potential. Individual differences should be appreciated and acknowledged.
- 6. Aesthetic Appreciation:** Artistic pursuits have always been the sign of an advanced culture. Bringing artistic awareness into the classroom creates the climate for further artistic responsiveness.

The physical, emotional, and mental stimulation of a session of Creative Drama will transfer into enthusiasm for regular curricular tasks. Language arts, reading, social studies, history and science can all incorporate Creative Drama activities for greater understanding and retention of ideas.

Through Creative Drama, teachers have an opportunity to bring humanistic values into the classroom. The children learn effective democracy, and gain healthy mental and emotional attitudes toward themselves and others.

How To Use This Guide

The material in this book has been designed to give the teacher specific activities and an opportunity for her own creativity. Yet, the teacher needs to be flexible. The children listen to the drama ideas or to a story, and using their own dialogue and movement, create and expand on the material presented. The children may take any direction and place an emphasis on an entirely different situation than anticipated.

It is important for the teacher to understand the nature of Creative Drama: informal, improvised and spontaneous rather than memorized dialogue and directed action. The children should be guided to plan their own conception of the language and movement of the characters in the stories.

A minimum of two sessions a week is desirable. The child's retention of previous experiences will help in future sessions, if they are frequent.

The new words are introduced only if the teacher feels they will enhance the session and be of value in vocabulary growth.

The teacher should find the most convenient time of day for these activities, based on the mood and attitude of the students and her own schedule. Restlessness and stress are often relieved by a short Creative Drama activity.

The records that accompany warm-ups and activities are found in the school music resource center or a public library record collection. Any record can be used solely for the purpose of relaxing the children in preparation for the activity. The children who observe the performance assume the role of the audience. The music/words indicate to the audience that the dramatization should not be interrupted.

Evaluation and discussion are very important to the Creative Drama process. They sharpen the child's critical skills and help him develop high standards for his own work. The role name, rather than the child's given name, is always used when evaluating to avoid making the criticism seem personal.

The teacher may follow-up a session with other correlated activities by observing the direction the children have taken during their performance.

Process: An explanation of the sections in each session.

Focus: The basic theme of the lesson.

New Word: The words are used for vocabulary building, one of the values of Creative Drama.

Warm-Up: The children work as an ensemble so each one has the opportunity to try the ideas from the story. It involves all of the children.

Activity: The drama itself. When the book or story is readily available, it will appear as a reference and the teacher will prepare for the session from the reference. Other stories are included in the book.

Characters: These are listed in order of appearance in the story. The children volunteer for the roles. Other children are audience or become a part of the environment: trees, clouds, statues, doors, rocks, ants, . . . as appropriate for the scene.

Group Planning: The children review the plot, action and dialogue of the story as well as plan the location or setting in the room.

Definition of Terms

Creative Drama: The art of informal dramatization using spontaneous dialogue and improvised action.

Dialogue: Direct spoken communication between characters.

Characterization: Understanding and portraying a role that is different from your normal self.

Pantomime: Communicating an idea through action without words.

Scene: A segment of a story that takes place in one setting and is one part of a complete story.

Teacher's Notes: It is suggested that the teacher record his/her own reactions to the session for future reference.

“Curtain”: This signals both the beginning and the end of a scene.

Role: Playing the part of a character other than yourself.

Improvisation: Acting out spontaneous ideas or concepts.

Side-Coaching: Interjecting information during a scene. The scene runs without interruption unless the players need help to continue the playing.

Session 1

Time: 10 minutes

Me

Space:

Sit or stand by the desk.

Focus:

Self-awareness

New Word:

Pantomime: Movement without words to communicate an idea.

Warm-up:

The children tap or clap their name. The teacher introduces the warm-up by clapping her name first. Each child will then take a turn. Encourage the children to tap or clap out a natural rhythm instead of a steady beat. There may be long and short pauses between the claps. Clap both loud and soft.

Activity:

“Move It”

The children stand by their desks. Start the activity by asking the children to roll their heads. The teacher says:

“Let’s find out the different ways we can move parts of our body. First, without moving the rest of your body, roll your head in a complete circle. Go slowly and make the circle as big as possible. Relax! Move your left arm only from the shoulder while keeping the rest of your body quiet. Now the right arm. See how many ways your arms move from your shoulder.”

The activity continues with the elbow, wrist and fingers on the left hand and then the right hand and arm. The children bend at the waist in a circular movement. They make circles with first the left and then the right leg. Develop the warm-up activity and vary it by asking the children to do it faster or slower using the whole body.