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## Use of Drama Explorative Strategies in the English-language Classroom

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One Tuesday, on his way to Drama, Paul  
Bumped into Keith and Wayne outside the Hall.  
'Ey, Paulie, 'ere a minute.' That was Keith.  
They took him to a corner underneath  
A staircase, whispered 'You like Drama?' 'No.'  
He hated it. He didn't want to go.  
You had to throw yourself around and yell,  
Express your feelings. Paul did not do well.  
'Be late with us. It's OK. It's a laugh.  
You'll only have to do the second half.'  
(Cope, 2001)

### Introduction

An aversion to drama, as shown above in Wendy Cope's poem *A Teacher's Tale*, is common in state schools in the UK, where it is a mandatory subject for Year 7 to 9 students. Few adolescents like exposing themselves verbally, physically, and emotionally in front of their peers, and if they had a choice, they might, like these three boys, bunk off or feign illness to avoid participation. In Japan's teacher-centered classrooms, where students are starved of verbal, let alone physical or emotional expression, the same resistance to drama would probably exist if it found its place on the school curriculum. Yet this is unlikely to happen as the Ministry of Education (MEXT) has more pressing issues at hand, one being the improvement in the English abilities of young people. By 2020, English will be taught as a formal subject in elementary schools to fifth and sixth graders, English class hours will double, and the number of foreign teachers will increase to 150,000, a major step to compensate for consistently low scores on TOEFL exams (Aoki, 2016). Other revisions at high school level include new kinds of classes in Geography, Japanese, and Modern History, and the introduction of a new style of teaching called *active learning*, all of which will be student-centered and designed to encourage discussion of opinions as well as problem-solving (McCrostie, 2016). However, at university level, concerns are less about obtaining high scores in exams and more about getting students to be confident speakers of English. Since 2003, the government has been urging universities to improve and reform the way they teach English so that young people can actively and immediately work in global contexts after graduation (MEXT, 2003). English departments are constantly seeking communicative and active ways to teach English, and teaching drama in the English-language classroom could well be one of them.

Drama is not a new idea in the English-language classroom. Drama teaching in the English-language classroom developed from the drama teaching education of the 1950s and 1960s (Yoshida, 1996). But drama has arguably been left aside as it involves speaking, the most challenging of the four language skills (Gill, 2013). In Japan, where students tend to be passive in class

it is not surprising that there is skepticism or uncertainty among teachers regarding the use of drama in the English-language classroom. There has not been a great deal of research about whether drama can improve an English learner's speaking ability. Conducting valid and reliable research about what is happening in drama-oriented language classrooms has been neglected by language teachers and researchers and the results of what research has been done is based on intuition and experience, rather than on empirical evidence (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). Yet, contradictory to this, research has shown some benefits. Drama goes beyond the rote learning of words and grammar but teaches students about meaning, motivation, and emotion (Miccoli, 2003). It promotes the acquisition of language and the spontaneous use of the language and increases engagement and confidence (Shapiro & Leopoldo, 2012). Exercises in meaningful communication, as opposed to grammar-focused exercises, can create a more motivating experience and assist in revitalizing the interest of students with low proficiency (Sato, 2001). One of the biggest benefits is the fun students have using it. Students tend to be more relaxed and open to participation, and quicker at overcoming inhibition towards new activities in drama's playful environment (Ranzoni, 2003). Although too much fun can lead to a casual environment and prevent students from talking in English, drama activities can remove the walls of silence typical in the Japanese classroom and provide students with exciting opportunities to speak English, overcome shyness, and actively participate (Dailey, 2009).

Drama courses in English are currently offered in some universities as an elective study, which means students are free to choose if they want to enroll, and teachers are free to design, implement, and evaluate the course. Faculties tend to ask teachers with a background in drama to run these courses, but sometimes they are left in the hands of beginners who are unsure or unaware of what to teach. Some teachers may design an energetic and sketchy drama games course (e.g. Maley and Duff), a very dry and literary theatre course, or an overly practical and unrealistic acting course, overlooking the difference between drama and theatre in education. It is important to understand the distinction between the two. Drama is a process of exploration of a text or

event, whereas theatre is working towards a product which is seen by an audience. Students should not be judged on their skills as performers, but rather be expected to utilize their learned knowledge to communicate in meaningful ways (Charles & Kusanagi, 2006). It is crucial then that a syllabus exists to provide students and teachers at university level with useful and appropriate drama strategies that can help students improve their communication in the English-language classroom. This essay sets out to provide exactly that. I intend to outline eight explorative strategies that I have taught in GCSE level Drama classes in the UK, which consist of ways to use drama to explore topics, themes, and issues. These strategies are outlined in the *Edexcel GCSE Drama Student Book* (2009) as follows: narration, still images, thought tracking, marking the moment, hot seating, roleplay, cross cutting, and forum theater. In addition, I explore elements of drama that relate to the presentation of a story and characters to help students broaden their understanding of what is happening and who is involved. To steer away from the idea that students must act, I use a poem rather than a play. I want to show that drama is a form of exploration that students can use to improve their English and deepen their understanding of a text, and not merely a warm-up activity or a celebration for peers or relatives at the end of term. In using a poem, I hope to show that drama can be used and adapted for a variety of genres and forms of text. This study provides teachers with a series of activities to help them create a syllabus for intermediate and advanced level English learners at university level.

I use a poem from Wendy Cope's collection of poetry *I Don't Know* (2001) titled *A Teacher's Tale*, which explores the sympathetic view of teachers as it follows the journey of a boy named Paul through primary school, where he comes to terms with new freedoms not experienced at home, and through secondary school, where he struggles to balance the pressure of his oppressive home life and the influences of his wayward peers. It poses questions about the role and responsibility of parents and teachers in nurturing young people and gives insight into relevant issues such as peer pressure and over-assertive parents who have high expectations of their children at the expense of learning

social skills. The school setting is familiar and the situations Paul experiences, such as first-day anxieties, parents evening, and dealing with authority figures, are all things most students have experienced. The poem's episodic form makes it accessible and manageable for teachers and students to work on, and because it is a long, 20-page narrative poem, it is elaborate enough for instructors to develop a whole semester of work from. The language is simple and humorous, and as it was commissioned to celebrate the 600th anniversary of Chaucer's death it makes use of iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets, which can introduce students to poetic form and foreshadow more challenging material like Shakespeare or Chaucer. In addition, extracts of dialogue between characters through the poem can be used to stimulate role play, extension, or elaboration. Overall, the poetry of Cope, whose earlier poetry collections *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (1986) and *Serious Concerns* (1992) opened my eyes to poetry as a student, is accessible and fun, and this poem is particularly relevant for teachers since it teaches them how to deal with unhappy, challenged, or oppressed students.

### Outline

I have divided my essay into 4 sections. In the first stage, *text exploration*, I explore initial and practical ways to approach a poem by looking at what to do in a first reading, how to break a poem down, and how to use narration to understand events. In the second stage, *capturing the moment*, I explore physical and emotional expression through work on still images, thought-tracking, and marking the moment activities. In the third stage, *understanding character*, I give insight into understanding and embodying character through characterization, role play, and hot seating activities. In the final stage, *scene focus*, I look at how to explore a scene in an imaginative and engaging way with the use of forum theatre and cross cutting. So that students get a broad overview of the poem, I have suggested specific areas of focus for each of the four sections of work. *Text exploration* will involve the whole poem, *capturing the moment* will involve the beginning section through to the middle (episodes 1-11), *understanding character* will incorporate the middle sections to the end

(episodes 12-32), and *scene focus* will involve the *stealing sequence* of the poem (episodes 21-28). An example of this breakdown is on page 12.

### Text Exploration

When working on a text in a traditional classroom, students tend to answer comprehension questions at the pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages, and are often spoon-fed answers by their teachers. However, in a drama class, students read the text aloud on their feet, and explore and learn by speaking and hearing the words and ideas spoken. Students are put in groups of 3 or 4, assigned a section of the poem, and asked to explore by reading their section in two ways. First, to understand verse, students read and switch speakers at the end of each line, for example:

*In London SE5 there lived a boy* (Student 1)

*Called Paul. He was his mother's pride and joy* (Student 2)

*When he was born in 1961 –* (Student 3)

*Best baby ever, Mrs. Skinner's son.* (Student 1)

Second, to explore the shape of thoughts, students read and switch speakers at marks of punctuation, for example:

*He had a dad,* (Student 1)

*too,* (Student 2)

*living with his mum.* (Student 3)

*In this our Paul was luckier than some,* (Student 1)

*Since many dads of London SE5*

*Were not at home,* (Student 2)

*though most were still alive* (Student 3)

While reading students should underline words they do not understand to check and discuss after reading. Following this activity, students rehearse and perform a summary of their section by identifying and enacting the major events in it. By working this way, students are thinking actively on their feet and making decisions collectively while carefully considering how to present their work to an audience. At first, students may be inhibited or intimidated by the practical nature of the process so it is crucial teachers guide and encourage

them to freely interpret the work the way that they want to, and not to worry about mistakes. By observing other group's enactments, students can learn the story of the poem and at the same teachers can find out how well students have understood the material.

*A Teacher's Tale* is episodic and has thirty-two sections. Students need to understand what is happening and what each character wants in each section, as well as get an overview of the shape of the poem. Russian actor, director and teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky advocated the use of episodes, which can be considered as the building blocks of the action, and smaller facts or events, which show what is happening at each moment (Benedetti, 1998). This can help break down a play so as to help actors, or in this case students, see how the action unfolds and what the components are. With this in mind, students give titles to each section of the poem by making decisions or inferences about what is happening in each moment. Students choose titles based on the text and if necessary by using quotes from the poem as a stimulus (see Table 1). This can be an analytical and arduous activity for English-learners, so the work should be undertaken in groups, and students should be reminded not to dwell on the wording of the titles for too long. As the poem is long and fragmented, students can also think of titles for larger sequences of action so they begin to see how smaller events fit together (see Table 2).

Narration is the use of written or spoken commentary to start or end a story, create atmosphere, bridge gaps, or simply tell a story. Students work in groups, and each group attends to one of the larger sequences established in Table 2. Teachers should encourage students to explore and extend the story by filling in any gaps in time, and considering before-events, between-events, and post-events. For example, before-event ideas for *Paul's early years* could involve questions such as *How did Mr. and Mrs. Skinner meet?*, *When did they get married?*, or *Did Paul attend nursery school?* Between-time ideas for *Life at Bridge Street school* could include *What class did Paul enjoy most at school?*, or *What did Paul think of school trips?* With this new information, students can think about dates and timescale by creating a timeline of all the events in the poem (see Figure 1).

*Table 1. Example of a Break Down for A Teacher's Tale by Sections*

Episode	Break Down
1	Paul is born.
2	Mrs. Skinner trains Paul to be obedient at home.
3	Paul is taught what is expected of him.
4	Paul enters primary school.
5	Mrs. Moore sees the cause of Paul's unhappiness.
6	Parent's Evening. Mrs. Moore discusses Paul's performance.
7	Impressions of Mr. & Mrs. Skinner.
8	What other teachers think of Paul.
9	Parent's Evening. Mr. Browning advises Paul's parents.
10	Tales of Mr. Browning.
11	Mr. Browning's words of encouragement.
12	Paul's summer at home.
13	Mrs. Skinner buys Paul's school uniform.
14	Escorting Paul to school.
15	Paul's first day at secondary school.
16	Wayne and Keith urge Paul to bunk Drama class.
17	The boys bunk class, are caught, and then reprimanded by headmaster.
18	Paul tells Mrs. Skinner he got detention.
19	Paul tries to come to terms with having an overbearing mother and school friends.
20	Paul attitude worsens. Mrs. Skinner blames school.
21	Wayne and Keith urge Paul to steal.
22	Mrs. Skinner denies Paul his pocket money.
23	Paul steals.
24	Paul is caught stealing.
25	Paul waits for Mrs. Skinner to arrive at the police station.
26	Paul recalls the encouraging words of past teachers.
27	Mrs. Skinner confronts Paul about stealing.
28	Paul vows never to steal again.
29	Paul receives silent treatment at home.
30	Paul's mother tells Paul what she has planned for him.
31	Paul vows to work hard.
32	Paul's future – leaving home, finding work, getting qualified, and becoming a teacher.

Table 2. Example of a Break Down for A Teacher's Tale by groups of sections.

Scenes	Break Down
Scenes 1-3	Paul's early years
Scenes 4-8	Life at Bridge Street School
Scenes 9-11	Influence of Mr. Browning
Scenes 12-13	Unhappy summer
Scenes 14-15	Starting Secondary school
Scenes 16-18	Bunking off
Scenes 19-20	Impressions of Paul's family
Scenes 21-29	Stealing
Scenes 30-32	Facing up to the problem.

**1958** - Paul's parents met through acquaintances

**1959** - Mr. & Mrs. Skinner's marriage

**1961** - Paul's birth

**1961-1965** - Paul has a quiet upbringing. His parents do not socialize with other parents in the area and rarely take him to play areas. Instead of going to taking Paul to daycare, Mrs. Skinner schools him at home in her rules and expectations.

Figure 1. Example of a timeline for the sequence Paul's early years.

Once a timeline is established, groups can narrate and enact the events in chronological order, using simple movement and brief dialogue. This is best done at a fast-pace with the role of narrator and performers being shared by all the group members. For example:

Narrator (Student 1): *1958. Paul's parents met through acquaintances.*

Friend (Student 2): *This is Tom Skinner.*

Friend (Student 3): *This is Wendy Skinner.*

Tom & Wendy (Student 1 & 4): *Nice to meet, you.*

Narrator (Student 2): *1959. Mr. & Mrs. Skinner's marriage.*

Priest (Student 3): *Do you take this woman?*

Tom (Student 1) *I do.*

Priest (Student 3) *Do you take this man?*

Wendy (Student 4) *I do.*

Priest (Student 3) *Congratulations!*

The purpose of the activity is to encourage students to make immediate and bold decisions, explore the characters and their relationships, and elaborate what is only hinted at in the poem. Although English learners find reproducing large amounts of dialogue very challenging, the mini improvised dialogues they think up in this activity can be creative and fun. By proceeding in this way, students are not pressured into reproducing too much dialogue, which is a challenge for English learners.

### **Capturing the Moment**

A still image, also known as a freeze-frame or tableau, is where a student or group freezes in a pose to show a feeling or situation as if they have been captured in a picture. This physical work allows students to explore audience awareness, use of body and levels in the space, and the characters and their relationships. At this stage of the explorative process, I suggest working on the beginning of the poem, sections 1 through 11 in Table 1. In these sections, the relationships between Paul and his mother, his school life, and his teachers are clearly established. There are two ways of working on still images; through *sculpting* and through group feedback. When using sculpting, one student is a sculptor who molds all the other group members. For example, with section 1, *Paul is born*, the sculptor, Student 1, might decide to mold Student 2 as Mrs. Skinner with a baby, Student 3 as Mr. Skinner with a big smile overlooking the baby, and Student 4, as a camera man, taking a picture of the happy family. The sculptor, this way, makes all decisions and the other students follow instructions by creating the shape or taking the position instructed or fashioned. Students who are sculpting can give instructions with phrases such as *raise your arm like a tree branch or push out your chest like a lion* or use simple verbs, such as *bend, move, open, lift*. When showing the still images to the other students, sculptors should make a sentence in English to describe their image, for example, *this represent, this shows or what this means is*

when presenting their work. With the group feedback activity, students individually create their image and offer feedback to each other to improve what they are trying to convey. When presenting, observing students should be allowed to move in and out of the image to explore distance or proximity between the characters within it. This activity informs students of the importance of physical and emotional expression, and the necessity for individual and shared creativity. An effective warm up for still image work is the *Tableaux* game, in which students work individually, in pairs, or small groups, and are given 10 seconds to create the shape of an object, animal, or concept that the teacher provides them with (Swale, 2009).

Thought tracking, which can be used with still images, is where you stop an individual during an activity and have him or her reveal the character's thoughts at that moment, either immediate thoughts or thoughts about what might happen. After saying *freeze*, the teacher enters the space and taps the shoulder of the student whose thought track they want to hear. Students might make a sentence, say a word or two, or even make sounds to express the character's feelings, but they should be encouraged to expand and give reasons for any comments they make. There are two ways to perform a thought tracking activity. Either a character unfreezes and talks about a situation or other characters, or several characters unfreeze and talk about one of the characters in the image. I suggest working on Episode 7 and 8, *Impression of Mr. & Mrs. Skinner* and *What other teachers think of Paul*, as in both cases several characters share their thoughts on one or two characters. This is a good exercise to explore physicality, give expression to the thoughts and feelings of the character in English, and build upon still image work already practiced.

Marking the moment is an activity which combines still image and thought-tracking work by identifying or *marking* a significant moment of a scene. For this activity, use key moments of dialogue from the poem as a stimulus. For example, in Episode 3, *Paul is taught what is expected of him*, the line 'Those who ask don't get' highlights the way Mrs. Skinner expects Paul to behave; or in Scene 5, *Parent's Evening. Mr. Browning advises Paul's parents*, the line spoken by Mrs. Moore's 'And he's learning to have fun' is significant because

it irritates Mrs. Skinner and lowers her opinion of the teacher. Students work on an episode from Table 1. in groups and identify which moment of action has the greatest impact on the characters by considering changes in behavior or mood within the section. Once the key moment is established with still image and thought-tracking activities, students enact the *pre-moment* leading up to the *freeze* and the *post-moment*, what happens after the freeze. This activity allows students to explore a whole episode in detail, make decisions about what is important in a scene that they want to show to an audience, create brief dialogue for a specific situation, and combine several explorative strategies. A good lead-in activity is to show students pictures containing two or more people and have them quickly recreate in groups the image with a pose and a pre- or post-moment (or both).

### Understanding Character

Characterization is the process of capturing the nature, personality, and

*Table 3. Cannon's (2012) Ten Questions, with Suggested Answers for Paul in Scene 18 - Paul Tells Mrs. Skinner he got Detention.*

	Question	Answer
1	Who am I?	Paul, aged 12
2	Where am I?	At home
3	When is it?	6pm, dinner time.
4	Where have I just come from?	From my room.
5	What do I want?	To tell Mum why I got detention
6	Why do I want it?	Because she will wonder why I am late home tomorrow.
7	Why do I want it now?	Because detention is tomorrow and dinner time is family time.
8	What would happen if I did not get it (tell her)?	She might find out from a teacher or read the detention note in my journal.
9	How do I get what I want by doing what?	By pleading for forgiveness.
10	What are my inner and outer obstacles?	I worry my Mum is going to be cross.

attitudes of the person you are playing, so it is important a student should build up knowledge and understanding of the character they are playing and the world they are entering. With script work, you interpret what the playwright has written, but with what we call a *devised* way of working, you create your own roles and characters from the stimulus you are given. With the limited amount of information given in the poem it is important that students use their own imaginations to flesh out the characters. For a broad analysis of the life of each character, students can sift through the material and make lists about the character under headings such as *Facts about the character*, *What the characters say about self*, *What the characters say about other people*, and *What other people say about the character* (Alfreds, 2007). For work on a specific scene, Cannon (2012) suggested 10 questions that students can consider in approaching a role (See Table 3).

This level of questioning encourages students to think deeply about a character in their specific situation, and fill in any information which is not discernible from the material. Students write down their answers in English and compare them with those of their scene partners. This helps them to establish where conflict is in the scene or establish the nature of the conflict in the scene. For this work, I suggest any scene involving Paul and Mrs. Skinner, scenes 18, 21, and 27, as their motives are conflicting. This systematic approach is analytical, so encourage students to share and help each other out in order to help make choices that are believable, and not random or contradictory to what is happening in the text. Writing a biography of the character can also help to consolidate ideas about the character and extend student's understanding of the character's life, in areas such as extended family, religion, early memories, holiday experiences, likes and dislikes, influences, attitudes, and backstory (Alfreds, 2007). For English learners, it is good to share these with the class because they can help other students form different opinions of their own characters, and for teachers, it is a good way to assess a student's understanding.

Role play is when a student pretends to be someone else by putting themselves in a particular situation and conveying what the person might say,

think or feel in that situation. It should not be confused with the kind of role play or dialogue practice which is standard in the English-language classroom, where students read prepared chunks of dialogue from a textbook. To do this, students need to know something about the character's life, background and environment and have empathy for what is going on in the character's head. To start with, students read their section of the poem, imagine themselves as the character in the situation, and note down what they want to say in the situation, or any questions they want to ask the other characters. When doing this activity, students receive a role play card with some facts about the character and space at the bottom to write down some notes (see Figure 2). After some preparation time, students should carry out an extended improvisation to explore the relationship of the characters in the situation.

*Figure 2. Role Play Cards for Scene 12 - Paul's summer at home*

<p>Role A: Paul</p> <p>Age: 11</p> <p>His mother has made him study in his room most of summer reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bored with reading books and studying indoors.</li> <li>● Cannot stay in any longer.</li> <li>● Scared of how his mother will react if he asks to do something different.</li> </ul> <p>-----</p> <p>Other details:</p>	<p>Role B: Mum</p> <p>Age: 40</p> <p>Took time off work to spend time with Paul and hopes he will study and share his experiences with her.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concerned about his education.</li> <li>● Thinks her son is not mature enough and too impressionable to play with other youngsters.</li> <li>● Does not tolerate any disobedience.</li> </ul> <p>-----</p> <p>Other details:</p>
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With English learners, improvisation work is challenging because of their low speaking proficiency, so a good lead-in activity for this is to have students practice phoning another character and leaving a message on the phone. This activity allows students to practice expressing what they want to say before confronting the other character in the role-play situation. Role play work enables students to get inside the character and carry out active and authentic conversation in English.

Hot seating is a technique that is performed to deepen students' understanding of a role. It involves one student sitting in a *hot seat* while other members fire questions for the student to answer. This activity puts emphasis on spontaneity and fluency as the questioners and the student being questioned must respond quickly. There are several ways to carry out this activity: one student in the hot seat is questioned by the group, or two or more students are questioned simultaneously, which means that there is less pressure on the student being questioned. It is recommended that questioners ask open-ended questions so that they can discover more information about the character. Students in the hot seat can respond in first person or third person, and it is perfectly fine to reply, *I don't know* if they are unsure about an answer. I suggest working on the *Bunking off* or *Stealing* sequences, as they are major events and questioners taking on the personae of headmaster and police officer should be able to come up with several questions. As a lead-in activity, *the interview game* is an energetic and fast-paced that requires an audience of students to fire general questions to a student in the hot seat. The aim of the game is for the questioners to prevent any pause. To accomplish this, they should fire a constant stream of questions at the student in the hot seat within a set time limit. Hot seating can be intimidating for English learners, but it is a useful way to discover new things about the characters, and improve fluency, communication and spontaneity.

### Scene Focus

Forum Theater involves a scene being enacted and observed, but at any point in the action, the performer or observer can stop the action to refocus it or ask

for help (Boal, 2002). In this activity, students are called *actor-spectators*, as they both act and observe, and they contribute by suggesting how a role might be played or by taking over and demonstrating how a situation might transpire. This way of working is collaborative as the audience can help by bringing ideas to the action, and inclusive as everyone is involved. For this activity, I suggest working on the *Stealing* sequence of the poem (episodes 21-28), since it is the most dramatic point in the story. To start with, prepare the students who are performing and inform the audience of the background of the scene in focus by presenting them with clear roles. For example, for Scene 27, *Mrs. Skinner confronts Paul about stealing*, students could be presented with the information shown in Figure 3.

**Student A** is a policeman. He has arrested Paul for stealing and is concerned with the rise in thefts by young people in the community.

**Student B** is Paul. He has been caught stealing soft drinks from a store. He feels he has no other option since his parents won't give him pocket money.

**Student C** is Mrs. Skinner. She is disgusted with her son's actions and wants the police to enforce the most severe penalty so he learns from his mistakes.

**Student D** is Mr. Skinner who wants to support his son but is afraid of taking sides against his wife.

Figure 3. Role information for forum theater activity (Boal, 2002).

Forum theatre was developed as a means of giving oppressed groups a voice and as a way of debating sources of oppression and freedom (Boal, 2002), and it is applicable to this poem since it is about a boy oppressed by his mother. It is also a good exercise since it forces the performing students to pretend to be someone else by taking on their beliefs, feelings and emotions. For English learners, this activity eases the burden of speaking and creating dialogue as the audience can join in and suggest dialogue and alternative ways to play a

scene or, if necessary, take over a role. It can also generate meaningful discussion which is as important as the performing of the scene.

Cross cutting involves a linear series of scenes that are created but then reordered by *cutting* forwards and backwards in time. This method is often used in the storytelling of films whereby images are shown in the form of flashbacks or flash forwards, or more than one image is shown at the same time. It is also a way to engage the audience, control their emotions, and alter the pace and tension of the action. Students decide how they want the audience to view a sequence of events, for example, by starting at the end and working backwards, or starting in the middle, performing a flashback to the beginning, and then continuing with the final scene. For this activity, I suggest working on the *Stealing* sequence (episodes 21-28) as the episodes are closely linked in time. For example, in Scene 26, *Paul remembers the encouraging words of his teachers*, you could show Mrs. Moore and Mr. Browning appearing before Paul on opposite sides of the stage. Another cross-cutting method is showing a scene from the perspective of different characters. For example, in Scene 24, *Paul is caught stealing*, you could show the theft from the perspective of Paul, of the storekeeper, of Paul's classmates, or even of an eyewitness. With this activity students can consolidate their work on several scenes, and be creative in considering how their work is seen by an audience.

### Conclusion

In this essay, I have outlined the eight drama strategies which can be used in the English-language classroom. The order I have presented them in - *text exploration*, *capturing the moment*, *understanding character*, and *scene focus* - is logical and helpful for English learners and drama beginners as it gradually leads students from the fundamental and initial stage of approaching a text to a more culminating and consummate stage of performing the action. Students start by exploring the broader world of the poem and its multitude of characters before undertaking specific work on a scene and a single character, students move from a more thoughtful and analytical approach to a physical and embodied approach, and students gain an understanding of the characters

and their motives before giving words and a voice to the character. The order I have suggested is not fixed, and teachers are free to change the order or omit strategies to suit their class and needs. These strategies work as a series, like I have shown, or in isolation.

The explorative strategies described in this essay are student-centered, which means the students are ones at the center of the learning, making decisions from the choices they are presented with. The practical nature of the work enables students to make on-your-feet discoveries about a story and the characters within it, which is something that cannot be done from a straightforward reading of a work. Most of the activities are kinesthetic which means students carry out physical activity rather than passively listen to a teacher or watch a demonstration of something. Through active and collaborative participation, students bring physicality and emotion to their work and make personal choices which are relevant to them, and any discoveries that are made are not just stored in their head but embodied through what they do and show. Through presenting their work to others, students use visual intelligences and think about how it looks and what it means to an observer. Students also draw on cultural differences as they see distinctions between the character and themselves. With a poem a stimulus for discovery, students must collect, listen to, retell, illustrate and share stories and ideas and these add a cultural level to the class environment. With a *devised* way of working, students have greater freedom to use imagination to create and expand their understanding of the story and the characters in it. Students should come away from this experience with the excitement and novelty of working on a creative process, a greater range of communicative techniques, an awareness of dramatic strategies and activities, and more confidence in themselves as speakers of English.

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