

Action Strategies for Readers:

Using frontloading, think alouds,
drama-in- education and action strategies
to deepen engagement and comprehension

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Drama - wherever it occurs

- People make it happen when they agree to ‘imagine to learn’
- Participants actively depict other people, forces, ideas
- In a tension to come, or is ‘happening’, or ‘has happened’
- And action and behavior is AS IF it is happening in the now of time
- However, the created context holds the elements of art,
 - the narrative is more than just events; meaning is created through metaphor

Providing a situation or simulated context for learning

“Recent investigations of learning challenge the separating of what is learned from how it is learned and used. The activity in which knowledge is developed and deployed, it is now argued, is not separate from nor ancillary to learning and cognition. Nor is it neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of what is learned. Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity.

Learning and cognition are fundamentally situated.”

Brown, Collins and DuGuid,
*Situated cognition and the culture
of learning.*

Why Drama?

- **It is student-centered:** dramas begin and are driven by student interests, by what they find significant and socially relevant
- **It is socio-constructivist:** participants construct meaning and understanding together
- **It is democratic:** Every one has a voice and the voice must be attended
- **It is liminal:** it exists on the threshold between the imaginary and the real. Things can be said, done and manipulated in ways that are experimental

Why Drama?

- **It is substantive:** Reasoning must be made visible, and knowledge made accountable. Hidden processes of reading and learning are made visible and available
- **It is inquiry:** We go beyond facts to their causes, meaning, ramifications, to what could be different: ethnography, phenomenology, action research
- **It is fun and playful:** “In play, the child is always a head taller than herself.” Vygotsky, Bloom, Lyons, psychology, neurophysiology, educational and cognitive research

Frontloading the Unit

- Love at first sight is possible
- Teenagers cannot experience “true” love
- Love means never having to say you’re sorry
- In love relationships, opposites attract
- You can’t expect a person to change his or her habits after marriage

Frontloading the Drama

- Forum Drama: Getting the conceptual stuff
- CNN undercover reporters
- Think/Pair/Share, then Forum: Getting the procedures
- Kids in the lunchroom: inferring the costs and benefits; preparation for reading the subtext, seeing complex implied relationships

Pros

- Get a date/ prom - get what I want, date on Friday
- No work - don't have to work to please her
- Revenge – get back at so and so
- Fun
- Manipulate others – give it to the principal
- Get the cutest boy/ girl
- Break up another relationship
- Make \$\$\$
- Could give it to my parents who are having trouble
- Other people will wonder what I've got; what they've been missing.

Cons

- Stalking?
- Does it wear off?
- Rules about drugs
- Cost
- Is it ethical? (What will my priest say?)
- Not organic
- Pregnancy
- Trapped forever
- Does it promote acne?
- Could it kill you/ him?
- Iffy - could fall in love with wrong person

The work drama can do for readers

Before reading:

- Activate schema or relevant background experiences, connect to related texts
- Build schema
- Set purposes
- Motivate readers
- Prepare students for story entry

During reading . . .

- Help evoke textual world
- Sustain the *story world*
- Enliven reading
- Enter perspectives, become characters or agents
- Connect personally to larger issues: connect self to other; personal relevance to social significance
- See places, actions, people
- Elaborate on the *story world*

During reading

- Infer - fill in story gaps
- Connect our lives to literature
- Connect literature to our lives
- Engage the ethical imagination - ask what if?
- Manipulate the *story world* - try out actions, provide opportunities to experiment with our lives
- Make the reading act visible
- Assist each other's reading performance
- Share ways of reading and making meaning

After reading

- Reflect on the meaning of the *story world*
- Reflect on theme
- Reflect on the constructedness of story
- Reflect on our participation in constructing the *story world*
- Pursue inquiry into issues raised

Drama/ action strategies & flow

- Meaningful context of inquiry
- Clear macro- and micro- purposes
- Social and collaborative
- Assistance to make meaning/learn new strategies - leading to competence
- Making and doing: immediate functionality
- Laughter and Fun

Drama and Flow

- Move from personal relevance to social significance
- Exportability and transfer
- Short - immediate sense of accomplishment
- Voice and Choice: competence and control
- Making your own meaning/staking your own identify/
demonstrating your own strengths

References

- *Action strategies for deepening comprehension*, Wilhelm, Scholastic
- *Imagining to learn: Drama, integration, ethics and inquiry*, Wilhelm & Edmiston, Heinemann

Frontloading the drama: Controversial statements

1. You can almost always trust authorities to work in your best interest.
2. It is important to directly address problems with those involved before going to a third party.
3. Children need to have their civil rights more vigorously defended than those of any other group