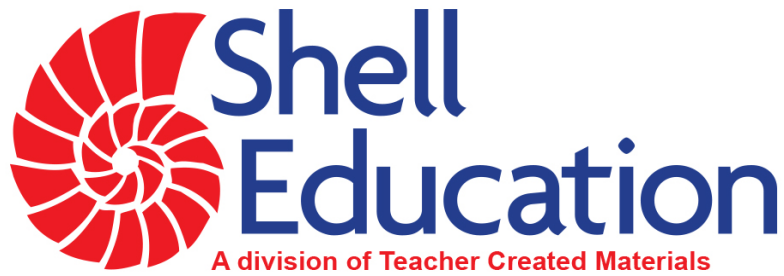


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— SECOND EDITION —

# INTEGRATING THE ARTS

## IN LANGUAGE ARTS

30 Strategies to Create  
Dynamic Lessons

Jennifer M. Bogard  
Lisa Donovan

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# Preface

Welcome to the second edition of the Integrating the Arts series! Now, more than ever, educators are experiencing what the arts have always offered: instructional approaches for social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching that value students’ funds of knowledge and lived experiences.

This series of books was launched initially to share more widely the success of arts integration in transforming classrooms and to foreground effective and easy-to-implement ideas. Since the first editions were published, educators have reached out telling us their stories and experiences using these strategies with their students.

We’re so grateful for the feedback we received from educators. We loved hearing how you could flip through the books with your colleagues at planning time and choose a lesson to implement that afternoon or the next day. The practical aspect of the books was a highlight of the feedback. We learned that the lessons were versatile and worked with a wide variety of topics and learning targets. You’ll find this continues to be a focus in our latest work, where we offer even more learning experiences for your classroom.

Here’s what you’ll find new and different in the second edition:

- inclusion of diverse perspectives and culturally responsive strategies that invite students to tap into their individual ideas and lived experiences
- a variety of student examples
- carefully selected ideas for mentor texts of multiple genres and modalities

- suggestions for the inclusion of primary sources
- several new strategies to bring to your classroom
- call-out boxes to highlight key insights and ideas
- resources for finding texts that bring diverse voices to your classroom
- a new structure in the movement chapter that provides additional details for classroom implementation
- a focus on the elements and key vocabulary of each art form
- updated standards

Dig in and enjoy! Let the power of the novelty of the arts bolster deep engagement with your content areas. We hope you create, experiment, and explore the artistic strategies alongside students, curating your own portfolio of creative work.

.....

“The arts help children develop creative problem-solving skills, motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making skills, risk-taking skills, and inventiveness.”  
—Sharuna Segaren (2019, para. 20)

.....

# Drama

## Understanding Drama

Integrating drama into the language arts classroom can deepen students' connection with language arts concepts and foster their ability to find relevance to their own lives and interests.

Drama can provide engaging contexts for exploring language arts ideas. By enacting scenes that connect to a language arts concept or skill, students can apply their learning in real-world settings. Drama strategies work well outdoors, where students can take advantage of space and natural settings.

When we integrate drama into the language arts classroom, we invite our students to consider particular situations in which language arts ideas are embedded. As students explore these scenarios, they uncover and deepen their language arts thinking, make personal connections to language arts, and recognize its real-world relevance. Christopher Andersen (2004) notes that drama has the ability to re-create the essential elements in the world; as such, drama can place language arts in authentic situations that make sense to students.

When students explore language arts through the lens of a character, they are called upon to imagine themselves working through processes, events, and dilemmas. In their roles they must make choices, solve problems, translate concepts, and articulate ideas. This process requires students to explain, persuade, clarify, and negotiate their thinking (Elliott-Johns et al. 2012). As students investigate perspectives that are different from their own, they expand their worldviews and develop an awareness of their own. Such experiences help students clarify their thinking, understand different perspectives, and consider new strategies for solving problems.

Drama will provide students with contexts that can ground their language arts investigations. And of course, through dramatic explorations, students also learn and develop skills in drama.

Many of these strategies incorporate process drama, in which the teacher and students work

together to explore a problem or situation without a script through improvisation (O'Neill 1995). This allows the drama to develop organically, with students' ideas and impulses leading the way. These drama strategies provide a rich context for language arts investigations where students imagine themselves in a variety of language arts situations. Exploring language arts ideas through dramatic scenarios creates motivation for students to participate eagerly in the exploration of ideas from multiple perspectives.

## Elements of Drama

In the field of drama there are many different ideas about which elements are important in dramatic work. These definitions are adapted from a variety of sources, including the "Drama Handbook" (International School of Athens, n.d.), "The 12 Dramatic Elements" (Cash, n.d.), and "Elements of Drama" (Windmill Theatre Company, n.d.).

- **Roles:** The characters (people, animals, objects, ideas, and more) in a drama
- **Tension:** Dramatic friction or opposition that emerges from a conflict, struggle, or juxtaposition of ideas or motivations; dramatic tension drives action and generates interest
- **Time:** The pacing of how action moves as the drama unfolds
- **Dialogue:** The words spoken by characters in a drama
- **Situations:** The circumstances that frame the drama and identify what is happening and what the problem is
- **Space:** Where the drama unfolds or the use of the performance space; also the positioning of the body across levels in space (low, medium, and high)

## Drama (cont.)

### Strategies for Drama

#### Visualization

In this strategy, students imagine a moment as it unfolds by listening to a sensory description read aloud. Sometimes called mental movie, guided imagery, or guided tour, a dramatic visualization invites students into the world of a text, character, moment, or setting. Teachers use this strategy to “build background knowledge and experience, both factual and emotional, about an event and to build interest on a topic or story” (Neelands and Goode, n.d.). There are a variety of ways to use visualization. For example, you can read a text or tell a story using vivid details to portray a character who moves through a scene. Students use visualization to experience the character’s perspective and explore the setting with the sights and sensory details as if moving through it themselves. “Ideally the text is in the second person (‘you’ form) and includes rich sensory detail to engage students more deeply in the situation or a dilemma” (Neelands and Goode, n.d.). This can serve as a prewriting or prereading activity to engage students more deeply with content.

#### Tableaux

Sometimes called image theater or human sculpture, *tableau* is a French word that means “frozen picture.” It is a drama technique that gives students an opportunity to explore an idea without movement or speaking. In this strategy, students use their bodies individually or in small groups to create an image to tell a story, represent a concept literally, or create a tangible representation of an abstract concept. Working with physical stance (low, medium, high), suggested relationships (body placement and eye contact), and a sense of action frozen in time encourages students to explore ideas and provides a range of ways for students to share what they know about a concept. One person can create a frozen image or a group can work together. The process of creating group tableaux prompts discussion of the characteristics of

what is being portrayed. The learning occurs in the process of translating ideas to physical representation. Tableaux can also be used as a way to gain entry into a complex idea or bigger project (Walker, Tabone, and Weltsek 2011).

#### Enacting Scenes

The bread and butter of drama is the development and enactment of scenes. Students portray characters that find themselves in particular settings and influenced by specific circumstances. They make choices, solve problems, and react to relationships with other characters. We watch (or participate) as characters make choices and deal with implications. Scenes are valuable thinking frames and can be used flexibly across content and contexts. Studies suggest that learning through drama benefits comprehension, including increased confidence with speaking, fluency, and working with complex language (Brouillette and Jennings 2010). Drama integration supports writing skills in terms of focus, use of details, and the navigation of meaning through the consideration of multiple perspectives (Cremin et al. 2006). Students can enter a suggested scene or create their own in response to a particular context, need, dilemma, or topic. They find that a story is enacted through a series of scenes.

This process of acting out a text provides a meaningful opportunity for students to go back through the text and reread parts that were not clear, visualize elements in the story, and consider character choices, the role of context, circumstances, and character motivation. Students imagine the character coming to life, question what they are reading, and check for story elements in a natural, purposeful manner. This metacognition, or being aware of the reading strategies as they are used, leads students to a deeper understanding of the text.

## Drama (cont.)

### Monologue

A *monologue* is a dramatic scene performed by one person. In creating a monologue, students take on the perspective of a character in a story, real or imagined, and speak directly to the audience for one to three minutes. The character must be established without interacting with others (that would be a dialogue) and must speak in a way that engages the audience with this singular focus.

Often there are monologues in stories and plays that illuminate what a character is thinking. Most often, a monologue reveals a conflict of some kind that the character is wrestling with, a choice to be made, or a problem to be solved. Note that variations include soliloquy, in which a character speaks to themselves. The creation of a monologue provides the opportunity to investigate what Barry Lane calls a “thoughtshot” of a character’s inner thinking (1992).

This strategy encourages students to “get into the head” of a particular character. Eventually the goal is for students to create their own monologues, but you may want to introduce the strategy by having students explore prepared ones in resources such as *Magnificent Monologues for Kids 2: More Kids’ Monologues for Every Occasion* by Chambers Stevens and *Minute Monologues for Kids* by Ruth Mae Roddy.

Next students can develop characters and create and perform monologues for inanimate objects or forces, or they can portray specific characters (a historical figure; a character from a book, a newspaper article, or a painting; or an imagined character they have created). In order for a monologue to be dramatic, the character must have some tension or conflict that they are wrestling with. This conflict can be an internal or external dilemma. Its resolution or the exploration of this tension creates dramatic interest.

### Improvisation

A foundation of drama, improvisation is when individuals create a scene or dramatization “in the moment,” making it up as they go. This kind of drama unfolds in exciting and often unpredictable ways as circumstances and character motivation come together to influence how a scene progresses. Improvisation can develop divergent thinking, language use, and social skills while encouraging students to test ideas in a situation that is safe but feels real.

"Drama is an invaluable tool for educators, since it supports every aspect of literacy development. Drama has been also recognized as a powerful learning medium because it creates a context for children to relate to their lived experience."

—Anika Stojkovic (2017)

# Enacting Scenes

## Model Lesson: Using Reading Strategies

### Overview

In this strategy, cooperative groups work together to act out one scene from a text of any genre. Students take on the roles of specific characters, ideas, or environmental elements. They act out the scene by exploring characters' needs, wants, and motivations as they navigate conflicts that bring to life the drama. Through this process, students use reading strategies such as rereading and scanning for clarification as they plan their enactment.

### Materials

- ▶ supplies to use as props
- ▶ text of any genre for enacting (folktale, mystery, nonfiction narrative)
- ▶ *Drama Planner* (pages 72–73)
- ▶ *Elements of Drama* (page 53)

### Standards

#### Grades K–2

- ▶ Utilizes comprehension strategies such as rereading and visualization while reading
- ▶ Describes characters, settings, and major events in a story
- ▶ Contributes ideas for dialogue and plot while collaborating on a short scene
- ▶ Uses voice, gesture, and movement to communicate emotions

#### Grades 3–5

- ▶ Utilizes comprehension strategies such as rereading and visualization while reading
- ▶ Describes theme, characters, settings, and major events in a story
- ▶ Collaborates to devise original ideas for a drama/theater work
- ▶ Makes physical choices to develop a character and create meaning

#### Grades 6–8

- ▶ Utilizes comprehension strategies such as rereading and visualization while reading
- ▶ Analyzes theme, characters, settings, and major events in a story
- ▶ Develops a character by considering inner thoughts and objectives
- ▶ Uses various physical choices and character objectives in a collaborative drama work

#### Grades 9–12

- ▶ Utilizes comprehension strategies such as rereading and visualization while reading
- ▶ Analyzes how characters develop, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme
- ▶ Identifies text information that influences character choices in a drama work
- ▶ Uses experiences to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama work



## Enacting Scenes *(cont.)*

### Preparation

Gather props or supplies from which students can make props. Choose a text that can be enacted by students, preferably one with characters, ideas, and events that are easy to work on in small groups. Also, decide whether you would like each group to enact a different text or different scenes from the same text. Additional ideas are provided in the Specific Grade-Level Ideas.

### Procedure

1. Tell students that they will be creating and enacting scenes from a story. Divide the class into small groups and assign a text, or have them choose their own. Discuss *Elements of Drama*.
2. Explain to students that enacting a scene from a story will require close attention to detail in the text. Discuss the reading strategies that students will find themselves using as they prepare to enact their scene: rereading the text, scanning the text for important information, identifying actions that move the story forward, visualizing the characters and details of the setting, determining the author's message, considering story elements, visualizing scenes as they create a beginning and an end, and using any prior knowledge about the story they may have.
3. Introduce the *Drama Planner* and distribute a copy to each group. Provide time for students to work in small groups to read and reread the text. Monitor groups and point out reading strategies as you observe them being used or hear them being discussed. Are students rereading the text? Scanning for important information? Visualizing the characters? Considering story elements? Visualizing scenes as they create a beginning and an end?
4. Have students rehearse their scenes, improvising action and dialogue from what they remember about the story. Use the Planning Questions to guide students.
5. Have each group enact their scene for the class. After performing, have students write up their scenes in their writer's notebooks. Debrief with students about the process, using the Discussion Questions. Highlight how their knowledge of the text (because of reading strategies that helped aid comprehension) contributed to a successful enactment.

### Planning Questions

- ▶ How will you begin and end your scene?
- ▶ What props might you need to help dramatize the scene?
- ▶ What interesting action might take place as the plot unfolds?
- ▶ Besides the identified characters in the story, are there other objects or forces in the story that can be created as characters?
- ▶ What choices will you use in depicting your character (voice, movement, costume)?
- ▶ How will you show what your character wants in the scene and the obstacles in the way?

### Discussion Questions

- ▶ What reading strategies did you use to draw information from the text in planning your scenes?
- ▶ What other endings to your scene can you imagine?
- ▶ In what ways did enacting scenes affect your understanding of the text?
- ▶ What choices did you make in deciding how to enact your scene?

## Enacting Scenes *(cont.)*

### Specific Grade-Level Ideas

#### Grades K–2

Talk with students about the folktale “The Little Red Hen.” If desired, read the book *Interrupting Chicken* by David Ezra Stein and discuss how Little Red Hen changes the endings to the stories to save each character from an unfavorable outcome. Or discuss with students how they could change the original story in an unexpected way. Work with students to read and reread the story before enacting original beginnings and endings.

Share a wordless picture book with the whole class, discussing the sequence of events as they unfold. Point out how the illustrator uses body language and facial expressions to communicate the characters’ thoughts and feelings. Choose a meaningful scene and have groups bring it to life.

#### Grades 3–5

In addition to the K–2 Specific Grade-Level Ideas, have groups create a scene that does not exist in the text but could. Have students improvise these scenes first and then write them in their journals and explain why these invented scenes would be meaningful to the text. You will find that, because they acted out the scenes, their writing is more richly detailed and free flowing. Provide students with a digital camera to take pictures of particular moments. Students can print and tape these photographs into their writer’s notebooks and write about the moment.

#### Grades 3–5 *(cont.)*

Gather a collection of wordless books and provide small groups with a few books such as *Imagine!* by Raúl Colón. Have them discuss these questions as they browse the books: “Why do you think some authors choose to tell their stories through pictures instead of words? What information about the characters, settings, and story are revealed through illustrations? Are some events highlighted more than others? How? How do the authors reveal how the characters feel? How do the authors reveal the characters’ traits?” Invite groups to choose a scene from one of the books and enact it.

#### Grades 6–8

Have students choose a chapter from a book they are reading or a stanza from a poem. Invite them to change the scene that happened before the chapter and after the chapter. Have students enact those scenes for the class.

Ask students to consider how they could change the outcome of the story if they were the author, and then have them dramatize their new version.

Invite students to create and enact a scene that mirrors themes from their lives.

#### Grades 9–12

Invite students to enact a scene from a newspaper and discuss how the story changes based on the perspective of the writer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Drama Planner

**Directions:** Work with your group members to plan the scene you will be enacting.

Story moment to be enacted:

---

---

Characters involved in the scene:

---

---

What does your character want in the scene? What obstacles are in the way?

---

---

Action in the scene:

---

---

Point of tension or conflict that triggers action in the scene:

---

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Drama Planner *(cont.)*

**Directions:** What reading strategies did you use to help you understand the story and plan your scene? Check off strategies from the list:

- I reread to remember or answer a question I had.
- I scanned for important information.
- I visualized the characters coming to life and details of the setting.
- I thought about the problem and solution.
- I determined the author's message.
- I used what I already knew about stories to understand my scene better.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_