

# Fachtagung Bern, December 5, 2017

## Aim of the workshop

- Address different learner types, different personalities and trigger a different set of skills by becoming physically active.
- Opening up a new perspective to interpreting text which offers alternatives to purely intellectual analysis and thereby creating emotional and physical access to a literary text.
- Showing possibilities of tackling the interpretation of a poem via specific experiences that can come close to what students experience in real life.
- Enabling, encouraging and enhancing the use of everyday language.

## Reasons for doing warm-up activities

- Drama work involves body, mind, soul and emotions.
- The learning process is rooted in movements and physical representations.
- In order to represent a character, the actor must be aware of her/his physical potential.

## Getting to know the group

1. Group awareness, concentration, focus on partner, eye-contact:  
Claps in circle (Klatschkreis)
  - single clap
  - simultaneous clap
  - if one participant ducks down, the clap goes above her/his head
  - clap also goes across the circle
2. Physical awareness, relaxing muscular tension, setting mind free, awareness of one's surroundings:
  - Raumlaf – awareness of one's own body, observe room, point out objects in the room, group has their eyes closed, they point in the direction of the object that was described.
3. Voice
  - Participants start producing sound they feel comfortable with
  - Freeze (at individual pace) and listen to the sound carpet in the room

## Keying into role, keying into location

1. Without previous discussion, form a very quick statue with your neighbour that represents different meanings of the word 'homecoming' (don't discuss who you are, join in your partner's impulse spontaneously)
  - a. coming home after one year of travelling
  - b. coming back from a weekend in the mountains
  - c. coming home from a sports camp
  - d. coming home from school
  - e. college homecoming (yearly reunion of alumni)
2. Listening to the poem:
  - Students sit on the floor, spread out equally
  - Teacher reads out the poem while students have their eyes closed
  - Students quickly jot down the key image for every stanza and discuss this with a partner.

## Fachtagung Bern, December 5, 2017

### Focus on text – close reading

2 pairs join to a group of 4. Each group represents one still image/central moment/short interaction for each stanza.

### Interpretation of the poem

1. Overheard conversations (GW 2-3):
  - a. stanza 2: The pillow of the girl's<sup>1</sup> bed speaks out the girl's thoughts and feelings after she has been sent to bed OR the conversation between the teenager and the pillow that night.
  - b. stanza 3: The garden gate verbalizes its observations between the moment when the teenager snuck out of the house, retraced her way back from the phonebox and met the "silhouette of a father figure" who was waiting there. S1 represents the garden gate while S2 and S3 act as daughter and father.
2. Walls have ears: The group marks the four walls of the phone box, one person (or just a jacket) represents the teenager inside the phonebox. The actors representing the wall speak out
  - a. the teenager's thoughts at that very moment
  - b. lines of the teenager's side of the dialogue during earlier phone conversations when s/he sought refuge in the phonebox
3. Bringing objects to life:
 

stanzas 2 and 4: The canary yellow jacket tells its lifestory between the moment the girl first got it and the moment when she slipped into it again sixteen years later.  
[longer task that could/should be prepared as homework]  
→ students find a way to dramatize the story:

  - with hot-seating
  - with a conscience-alley for decision-taking
  - with a series of still images that are accompanied by a narrator, sound carpet, chorus and/or musical instruments
4. Switched roles:
 

Situation: after the teenager's return to the house:

  - a. Act out the dialogue as it might have taken place between the characters in the poem, then switch roles:
  - b. The girl is in role as the father, the father in role as the mother, the mother in role as the father (or different role changes).
5. Anticipating conversation:
 

Write down what the first person narrator in stanza 3 will say to the girl/boy when they meet for the second time. PW: Act out the conversation, whereas the girl's/boy's responses are spontaneous.

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<sup>1</sup> I always read the protagonist of the poem to be a girl and the first person narrator to be a boy. This may be due to the way Simon Armitage talked about the poem when I met him at the occasion of a WBZ course in Zürich. Interestingly enough, many of my students imagined the protagonist to be a boy.

## Fachtagung Bern, December 5, 2017

6. Word-by-word story about the “canary yellow cotton jacket”:
  - a. any story (that fits the context of the story)
  - b. restriction 1: the owner of the jacket is a teenage girl
  - c. restriction 2: the protagonists of the story are a teenage boy and a teenage girl
  - d. restriction 3: the protagonists are a teenage girl and her mother
  - e. restriction 4: the protagonist is a teenage girl on her way home from a party with her friends
  - f. restriction 5: the narrator of the story is the canary yellow jacket (story in first person narration)
 → aim: to elicit the underlying story of the yellow jacket (reading the implicit meaning of the poem, interpretation)

### Key notions represented via different drama techniques

1. Growing up/becoming independent:  
A social worker looks into the family situation by
  - interviewing each member of the family separately
  - the whole family together (expert interview)
  - sending each member of the family down a conscience alley in order to have them reflect on the (recurring) situation of the teenager not obeying/the teenager wanting to live an independent life.
2. Friendship/Love:  
Back to back conversation between the teenager and the person s/he has called from the phonebox.
3. Unrequited love:  
Elicit the boy's/girl's thoughts as s/he is sitting next to the phone, hoping the girl/boy will call (hot-seating or tapping on his/her shoulders as s/he is in a still image)
4. Trust:
  - Play the game of trust (GW5, one person in the middle)
  - Carry one student around the room (whole group supports the person being carried around)

### Final roundup

Send impressions from the afternoon round the circle: What do you take home with you?

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### SOME USEFUL SOURCES OF IDEAS

Bowell, Pemela and Heep, Brian (2001) *Planning Process Drama*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

The clearest introduction to process drama on the market. My absolute favourite!

Booth, David and Neelands, Jonothan (eds.) (1998) *Writing in Role. Classroom Projects Connecting Writing and Drama*, Hamilton, Caliburn Enterprises.

The stars on the horizon who published a book together. Bound to be good – and it is!

Kempe, Andy and Winkelmann, Ulrike (1998) *Das Klassenzimmer als Bühne, Dramapädagogische Unterrichtseinheiten für die Sekundarstufe*, Donauwörth, Auer.

Very well illustrated collection of ideas, introduction to different drama techniques.

Linklater, Kristin (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice*. Nik Hern Books.

*A detailed introduction to Kristin Linklater's approach to voice work.*

Neelands, Jonothan (1990) *Structuring Drama Work. A Handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Very useful, with practical information.*

Neelands, Jonothan (1998) *Beginning Drama 11-14*, London: David Fulton.

O'Neill, Cecily (1995) *Drama Worlds. A Framework for Process Drama*, Portsmouth: Heinemann.

*Illustrates O'Neill's idea of process drama, thus the key difference between performing plays and doing drama which is not intended to be shown to an audience.*

Taylor, Ken (ed.) (1991) *Drama Strategies. New Ideas from London Drama*, Oxford: Heinemann.

*Useful collection of practical ideas.*

Tselikas, Elektra I. (1999) *Dramapädagogik im Sprachunterricht*, Zürich: Orell Füssli.

*Good collection of specific drama activities.*