

EDUCATIONAL DRAMA: EXPERIENCING,
REFLECTING AND LEARNING

by

SUSAN SHELLI BAUM

B.A. Simon Fraser University, 1976

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Department of Language Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Conceptions of drama education have changed considerably since the turn of the century. Initially it had no place in the curriculum, then it became an elective subject area, and now it can be considered a vehicle for learning across subject areas. Each change brought with it new methodology, teaching strategies, and objectives. Traditionally, drama has been taught as a single subject focused on developing theatre skills with a lesser emphasis being given to social and personal development. Not all students have been able to benefit from this approach. Those who had “acting ability”, were extroverted, or were socially astute did well.

This study analyzes an approach to drama education using drama as a vehicle for learning both within that subject and across the curriculum. The literature review examines what educational drama is, the different methods for implementation, the skills necessary for teachers implementing drama, and the learning outcomes available through this process.

Educational drama was implemented in a drama ten and acting eleven/twelve class over a one year period. Journal entries from both students and teacher in addition to classroom discussion provided the data necessary for the study.

It was found that self-assessment forms, summaries of the year and journals were successful in stimulating personal development and learning, as well as an understanding of universals. At the same time students were made aware of and able to use theatre elements which enables teachers to cover the curriculum thoroughly as it now stands.

Educational drama relies heavily on the skill and understanding of the teacher. This research will hopefully aid in the development of teacher training in educational drama. It should also guide teachers wishing to implement this approach and be a foundation for further research in this area.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the early part of my graduate program, my advisor, Patrick Verriour, steered both Laurie Jardine and me into Gavin Bolton's drama course. It was the summer of 1990 and the turning point in teaching for me. Through this course, and by personally experiencing how drama in education works, I perceived its value. I then wanted my own students to experience the power of learning through drama as I had.

Bolton, as teacher, was a wonderful role model. He introduced intriguing dramas and theories. He was flexible in allowing students to learn in their own style and yet was firm to keep the right pace, and keep us all on track. He theorized, directed, acted, listened, evolved, and reprimanded, and we enthusiastically participated, discussed and learned. We saw a master at work. I realized the gift he gave us was not only his approach to teaching drama or his unique activities, but also his teaching style and skills. Bolton made me realize that to be a good teacher one must not only follow a structured curriculum, but be flexible and true to oneself. He also revealed the importance of the teacher in education/drama. With these ideas fresh in my mind, I set forth on my journey, as did Laurie. (See Laurie Jardine, M.A. Thesis.)

In the past I had taught drama/acting as a segmented skills based program. Although I had successes and wonderful moments, I felt the program was disjointed. Too much of the work seemed like light entertainment. I felt drama should not only be for extroverted students with acting abilities but should also offer something constructive for all students. Drama was too rich a tool to be used only for training the students to be proficient in theatre skills. The time was right for change in my approach to teaching.

Bolton's program was the impetus I needed to initiate this change. Fortunately, I felt I could attempt a different approach within the constraints of the authorized B.C. curriculum. The curriculum allowed for this flexibility. Educational drama was about personal learning. It allowed all students to participate, and take ownership of the content, and through the use of reflection learn emotionally and intellectually.

Purpose Of Study

The purpose of the study is to spark teachers' interest in educational drama. I am convinced that educational drama has much to offer both teachers and students in meeting the goals of Year 2000: A Framework for Learning, which focuses on student-centred learning and the integration of subject areas.

Implementing a new program is a difficult undertaking. When teachers are not fully cognizant of its theory, do not understand how to change or realize the final objectives, the process can bog down. Teachers are isolated in their classrooms and therefore frustrations and uncertainties are often not shared. The study hopes to address the isolated teacher and allow a conversation to develop between the writer and reader. My central aim in writing this thesis is meant to encourage teachers to try this approach.

Educational Significance

Theatre sports, commercials, comedy, warm-ups, theatre games! My drama classes seemed to reflect all that was current on television rather than society as a whole. Activities were short and flashy, geared to entertain, and captured the insignificant and trivial. Students acted out, laughed and enjoyed their antics. They did acquire self-confidence and social acting skills and communication skills, but more and more activities seemed disjointed. They lacked any real significance in their lives. When drama class was over students were left to learn about serious academic concerns in other subject areas.

I felt that educational drama might offer stimulating and refreshing challenges for both teacher and students. The art form is used to allow students to enter new levels of experience and understanding. A deeper, longer look is given to any one issue. It is viewed through many lenses. Educational drama allows students to see links between issues as well as the uniqueness of the particular. Students are encouraged to identify with that issue and enter into the “conversation of mankind” through the understanding and use of the theatre art form.

Limitations

This study describes one teacher’s experience with her drama classes over a one year period. My enthusiasm and experience after having taken an advanced drama in education course with Gavin Bolton probably affected the success of the implementation

process. Because I am an established teacher at this school, students were accepting of my ideas.

Students in my drama/acting classes were working at all levels of academic achievement. Some students were better able than others to respond in written form. This did not necessarily mean that only those students with writing ability were achieving significant learning experiences. Many students found it easier to verbalize their learning experiences which I then tried to take note of in my journal. I also found that many students, even when questions were provided, found it very difficult to respond on paper. When I had discussions with them, especially informal discussions, their perceptions, understanding and overall evaluations of drama in education were more pertinent and relevant than what was written in journals. I took note of this in my journal entries. By the end of the year a deeper level of understanding toward educational drama was achieved by both my students and me.

Definition Of Terms

Dramatic play: The dramatic playing mode occurs at the experiential end of the dramatic action continuum. It is in this medium that the participant examines events as they are actually occurring.

Performance mode: The performance mode lies at the opposite end of the dramatic action continuum. The purpose is to demonstrate a particular perspective to an audience, usually of co-learners.

Theatre elements: It is the manipulation of time, space and action which creates symbols and clarifies meaning. Theatre elements are integral to educational drama.

Educational drama: Educational drama engages the participants in a wide range of activities with the intention of exploring human situations. The collective experience of the participants leads to the creation of new meanings and understanding. The focus of the work lies in the change in understanding created by the experience, which is shaped by a careful selection of the elements of the art form.

Dramatic action: Dramatic action examines a narrow aspect of content deeply. The purpose is to explore symbolic not literal meanings to extract universal meanings. Dramatic action takes place in the present, but draws from the fictitious situation and the imagination of the learners to bring new understanding to the participants.

Context: Any content area can offer a wide variety of experiences and perspectives. It is the particular frame or aspect that the teacher chooses to examine that forms the context of that drama. Learning areas such as creating or interpreting are the teacher's priority. Student involvement is concerned with the development of the practical details of that context.

Teacher in role (TIR): A device which places the teacher in the dramatic activity alongside the students. From this position, the teacher can evoke through negotiation the direction of the drama by drawing on the contributions of the students.

Tableau (depiction): A still image created by the selective use of the art form which clarifies meaning of an event or idea.

Reflection: A process integral to the understanding of the ideas explored in the drama and how they relate to the individual. Reflection can and should occur at numerous points in the drama.

Playbuilding: The development of a single theme relevant to the participants. A collective piece of work is created through the use of dramatic conventions to convey multiple perspectives on the theme.

Role playing: Individuals or groups agree to adhere to the social conventions of a particular place and time to encounter an experience pertaining to the theme.

Cooperative Learning

Laurie Jardine and I took the Gavin Bolton course together in the summer of 1990. We were excited about taking the course together as we are in the same district but it turned out to be even more exciting that we shared the same enthusiasm for the new material and new approach. After working on various activities together during the course, we knew we were very compatible as cooperative learners and that our differences were complementary. We decided to meet continuously throughout the year to plan, analyze and assess our journey together. The goal would be separate theses in the same general area.

Our first meeting occurred in late August at which time we collected all material from the course and decided on a time line for implementing these activities. We felt secure in planning together because we had been participants in the activities and had experienced the outcomes.

Our first term involved following our agreed schedule. As we grew in confidence we started allowing the students and ourselves to chart new directions. Opportunities of the moment became part of the activities rather than the plan. We began to leave Bolton's (1990) agenda and allow ourselves more flexibility.

This year long journey was challenging and very rewarding. It was a journey embarked on with the help and support of a co-worker and friend. Co-operative learning works.

Curriculum

Laurie and I followed the same plan for our students for all grades. Even though I followed this plan with all my classes grades eight through twelve, for the purposes of this study I concentrated on only my drama ten and acting eleven/twelve classes. I felt that the curriculum could be met and learning would not be hindered by using the same plan in all grades. My approach differed; I merely added the necessary components of script work, memorization, styles of acting, etc. to each dramatic activity. For instance, A Midsummer Night's Dream drama was introduced, followed by an analysis of Shakespeare and his time, and finally script work and memorized scenes. With my younger grades, I only included the role drama.

There are two separate provincial curricula for acting eleven and twelve. Because I teach these courses combined, I have to alternate the two curricula. The year before I had covered acting twelve so this year I was to cover acting eleven. This gave me more leeway as the requirements were not as stringent.

Assessment

Assessment is a concern in educational drama. For many years I had evaluated drama/acting by activities marked out of ten. In every class I would introduce an activity, the students would present it, and I would evaluate their presentations.

With this new approach I did not want students thinking in terms of presenting and evaluation. My focus was on experiencing. This is internal and hard to read. I now had to use my own judgement as well as student journal entries and discussion as a means of assessment. The performance mode was part of this assessment. I also used student self-assessment forms. I would have students fill these out at the end of each term to assess their own learning in relation to theatre knowledge and use, their understanding of the issues, as well as their attitude and behavior in class.

I would provide a time near the end of each term to discuss with students their final grades. I found that the students and I usually agreed on these grades. I felt this system to be much fairer than what I was use to and much more in keeping with the overall philosophy of educational drama.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is intended to provide an overview of educational drama: what it is, the educational opportunities it provides, and the skills and strategies teachers need to develop to implement it.

Teachers have been reluctant to implement educational drama especially in the senior grades, because it is difficult to understand and harder to implement. Teachers have also been apprehensive that the curriculum may not be covered by using this approach. Many feel educational drama is ominously vague, lacking clear outcomes and assessment procedures. Drama as a subject based and skills oriented discipline is relatively easy to teach. Learning outcomes are known in advance and a clear product, easily evaluated, can be extracted at the end of the class or unit.

Drama as a vehicle for learning is not so simple. There is not always a visible product or visible learning objective. Drama is regarded as process: an exploration of possible learning experiences. "Significant moments" sought in this approach may or may not be reached. Teachers are not comfortable with learning as a process as it has no well defined outcomes. It is very difficult for teachers to let go and conceptualize learning outcomes in a vastly different manner with no readily available tools for assessment. The end result is that educational drama has been sadly neglected in B.C. secondary drama classrooms at the senior level.

When I began teaching drama I, like most drama teachers in the province, taught a subject based and skills oriented program. Drama eight to ten were based on the develop-

ment of skills such as mime, trust, concentration, speech, and improvisation. Acting eleven/twelve continued in this vein but centred more on the acquisition of acting skills, and the learning of theatre styles and history (Greek, Elizabethan, Comedia Del Arte, nineteenth century European, contemporary).

In the past the curriculum was influenced mostly by the dominant voices of Slade (1950) and Way (1967). Drama had been subject based and focused on the development of skills (voice, acting, directing) until they entered the scene. Student-centred play used for self-expression and personal growth became the new focus. A split developed between drama as play, and theatre as an art form. As a result, B.C. secondary schools had as their focus either play production, or drama as personal expression.

Having taught drama in B.C. schools over the last ten years I was very familiar with the orthodox program. A short period of time was spent on role drama with a longer period on skills such as concentration, blocking, character development, directing or voice. Each unit covered included one major theme, and students were evaluated by me in terms of performance ability and, to a much lesser extent, participation in class. Each unit and every class had distinct learning objectives with factual knowledge that had to be taught. Developing self-esteem and social skills occurred through the use of various games and activities.

While I and most drama educators in B.C. were using this program, during the 1970's in Britain two educators, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, were busy creating new ways of teaching this subject. Their underlying belief was that drama could be used for much more than teaching self development or theatre skills. In addition to this, drama

could be used as a medium of learning to have students experience, reflect, and come to new personal understandings. Learning outcomes were not concise and rigid, but instead depended on the background, interests, and needs of each student. Possible learning outcomes included making sense of universal, abstract, social, moral, and ethical concepts. These two leaders in the field of drama education changed the direction away from a focus on the individual to a socially-oriented learning experience. O'Neill (1985) writes

Drama works from the strength of the group. It draws on a common stock of experiences and in turn enriches the minds and feelings of the individuals within the group. (p46)

It is a collective experience.

Eisner (1985) states

. . . through the arts we have the opportunity to participate vicariously in the lives of others, to acquire an empathic understanding of situations, and therefore to know them in ways that only the arts can reveal...art gives us a richer more vivid and colourful image of reality, and a more profound insight into its formal structure. (p225)

The combination of theatre and drama offers a fuller and richer experience than either subscribed to separately. Drama as a vehicle for learning is student-centred. The starting point for any drama is the student's own reference point. Their existing language,

knowledge and interests provide the foundation from which to begin. Educational drama begins with student's experience and tries to achieve personal understanding from this foundation. As Neelands (1989) states

The teacher is attempting to match the child's existing experience of play to the less familiar forms of theatre in order to focus and deepen the child's learning experience. (p40).

I knew that I could no longer teach with the understanding that students were empty vessels that needed to be filled. Instead, I had to focus on their perspectives and consider them in terms of my viewpoint and that of the aims of the curriculum. Negotiation between the students and myself was of prime importance in achieving new levels of directions and understandings in class.

A radical shift had to take place in terms of learning outcomes. I could not confine learning to skills. But, I was unsure what direction I should be moving in. The leading drama educators had some answers.

Bolton (1985) states that four main kinds of learning take place in a drama class: learning based on content, learning based on personal development, learning based on social development and learning about the art form. Although all learnings were necessary he believed the most significant learning that could be achieved was a change in understanding. As a teacher I had to abandon my old learning objectives and be open to this possibility.

Many of the leading drama educators had different ways of evoking this experience. Their ideas offer a myriad of opportunities to the drama teacher. Heathcote is content oriented and always tries to bring together scientific and artistic perceptions. Acquisition of factual knowledge and language development are extremely important to her. Her development of the "mantle of the expert" reveals this. Bolton adheres more to changes in understanding on personal and abstract issues. For him "subject matter is emphasized as a stepping stone to exploring the issues, principles, implications, consequences and responsibilities behind the facts" (Byron, 1988).

Bolton delves into these issues indirectly by using such devices as parallels or analogies. Heathcote usually begins with a general area of interest to her students. She then finds one aspect of the issue, and develops a means of relating it to her students' own experiences. She tries to universalize the issue and relate it to the group (Byron). Byron (1988) writes, "This dropping of a particular into the universal is the digestion process of the arts, which creates the opportunity for reflection" (p97). According to Byron (1988) Heathcote believes universals can be seen as concepts which reveal common patterns in human experience. This allows the particular in drama to relate to the fictional context of the drama both to their own experience and to other context, fictional and real, historical and contemporary.

Jonathan Neelands (1990) perceives drama as encompassing a dialectical way of achieving understanding. He chooses to enter drama by "revealing the interaction between contradictory or opposing forces or even the contradictions within a single force or idea" (Byron, 1985). Neelands suggests "adapting a number of mutually illuminative viewpoints in relation to context rather than...the deep immersion in a single view-

point of role” (Byron, 1985). For him, contexts need to be chosen that defamiliarize the issue so that it can be seen afresh or held at distance. Bolton agrees with this, stating that distancing is an important means of protection for “it objectifies feeling as a means of interpreting through symbol and as a means of offering the freedom of form” (Graham, 1988, p74). David Davis (1988) views drama as a vehicle for clarifying social issues and inequalities. Educational drama is a synopsis of ideas generated by Bolton, Heathcote, O’Neill, Davis and others. Each has a unique point of view.

The teacher’s role in educational drama is crucial to the success of the work. Many skills are necessary for the teacher. Teachers must tap into the interest and understanding level of students to stimulate and direct them to believe in the drama, commit to it, experience it, and modify understanding. Various devices can be used in creating this experience. However, the teacher is rarely the omnipotent expert. The new role is one of facilitator who ‘evokes’ experiences (Wagner, 1976). Educational drama is not pre-determined by something which evolves. Chizik (1985) writes: “Teachers require a keen awareness and sensitivity to the needs of the immediate situation as well as the ability to respond to those needs” (p192). Teachers must always be thinking on their feet. Both teachers and students are “co-inquirers” in the process of learning. Teachers must abdicate authority to allow a greater responsibility to students. According to O’Neill and Lambert (1983, p85), “To some extent they must be prepared to put themselves in their pupil’s hands while retaining the functions, duties and responsibilities of the teacher”. Teachers can control the experience from within but outcomes are unpredictable. Students need to be constantly pushed to move beyond their experiential and understanding level to new realms of awareness.

Chizik (1985) points out that the teacher's function is to reveal the mesh of interests in any situation. This, she feels, can be accomplished through questioning strategies which "create a state of disequilibrium, prompting students to rethink and restructure previous knowledge" (p135-36). Heathcote states that teaching is precise and detailed involving the "minute particulars of a situation". The teacher's responsibility lies in taking the drama beyond experiencing to learning through reflection. Heathcote uses various devices to stimulate reflection in drama: teachers need to stop the drama to reflect, slow the pace, impose rituals; classify responses of students, and recategorize them for student feedback, interject probes and presses; and use symbols.

Old lesson plans had to be thrown out the window. I was no longer the expert. I no longer planned for ten minutes of relaxation, ten minutes of warm-up activities, introduction to an acting skill, and fifteen minutes to get into groups and prepare an improvisation based on the acquisition of these skills to be marked out of ten. This mark would be based on various factors such as concentration, focus, blocking, voice, character development, plot, creativity, etc.

In educational drama, I was part of the class and together we created and lived through various experiences. I would stop the experience, slow it down or speed it up at various appropriate times to allow for reflection. It is in the reflection time that learning can be evoked. This can be done through journal writing or discussion in and out of role. Assessment was based on the commitment level of students and the energy they put into the dramatic activity, performance mode and reflection. Student input in this process was therefore crucial.

Hence, a major shift in my methodology involved the use of reflection in the drama process. It was through reflection that the new outcomes could be achieved. Although discussion may have been a part of the old approach the focus of discussion related to theatre skills and performance levels of students. Were students using a skill effectively? Were they able to create a scene in terms of plot, tension, and use of space? At times the evaluation discussion could carry into issues that came up in the improvisation. These could be interesting side lines. During script work students developed an understanding of motivation and situation while searching for character. New understandings could take place there. Previously the focus was not on the new understanding, but on how well that understanding could be portrayed in the student's acting. Assessment was focused on the acquisition and performance level of skills. Hence drama classes tended to nurture the performers.

Educational drama allows for the participation of all students at all levels and in all learning styles. The focus is on learning, and the form this learning takes is evident in their manipulation of the theatre art form, journals and other writing, through discussion or art work. Not only is the drama class open to all students, but drama can be accessible to teachers in all subject areas because the focus of the work is on learning and reflection on that learning. Reflection is the crucial ingredient which takes experience to a different level.

Before reflection can take place students must be committed and believe in experiencing. Freedom is fostered in this experiencing because we are being someone else. We are playing. O'Neill (1985) maintains that there is a tie that binds theatre, drama and play. The boundary that separates play (spontaneous reacting) and art (giving the the-

atre form to play) is a conscious and reflective attitude. She writes “in drama we experience an ‘as if’ world and at the same time create the means of reflecting on existence”. Through dramatic play one is removed from interest, attention and emotion to a different time and location. This is an act of self-transcendence in which “art turns emotion into a means of self-liberation and gives us inner freedom” (O’Neill, 1985, p45).

Rosenberg (1989) equates reflection with metacognition and believes that the simultaneous actions of doing and monitoring stimulate growth and development of the students in many learning and social areas. Now participants in the drama process not only experienced their role but also observed themselves experiencing. Bolton (1990) named the participant observer in the drama process the percipient. As percipients, the students would observe, analyze and evaluate their actions during reflection. My students found this concept difficult to understand. Only as the year progressed were they understanding the idea of being a percipient.

Because it is difficult for students to understand, it is more important that teachers are skilled in using reflection. Reflection was a difficult component of educational drama for me to fully understand and implement. I had to constantly refocus my direction to learning about issues and away from theatre skills. And yet, I had to teach those skills and foster learning from within the art form. I found the transition uncomfortable. I also found myself feeling uneasy about not having rigid learning outcomes. Reflection was possible before, during and after dramatic play or performance mode. It could take place in role or out of role. It could involve the individual, groups or the entire class. I was not sure how to reflect, when to reflect or what to reflect upon.

Eisner (1985) coined the term “connoisseurship” in regards to assessing education, which he describes as the “act of knowledgeable perception”. It involves the ability to perceive what is subtle, complex, and important. According to Eisner, it requires the individual to recognize and appreciate the “qualities of a particular”. I believe that connoisseurship is essential for fostering reflection in educational drama.

When does one use reflection? Eisner (1985) has an example:

The perception and appreciation of a particular requires a sensory memory. For example, if one is to develop connoisseurship of wine, learn how to attend to its qualities and be able to recall from one’s gustatory memory — and in the case of wine, the olfactory and visual memories also come into play — the qualities of other wines in order to have a backdrop against the particular qualities of the wine being tasted can be compared and contrasted. In the case of music, the auditory mode provides a backdrop. A connoisseur could compare Arturo Toscanini’s performance of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony with that of Herbert Von Karajan. Only after a range of experiences are had in the mode of expression will sophisticated levels of connoisseurship be developed.

He follows with the idea that one must have more than experience, “to develop connoisseurship one must have a desire to perceive subtleties, to become a student of human behavior, to focus one’s perception. One must go beyond looking to seeing” (p222). In order to use reflection as well as other skills and strategies in educational drama one must develop connoisseurship. This certainly became evident to me in my year’s journey.

In order for a teacher to be able to achieve new understandings in reflection the teacher must be able to get individual students and the class as a whole to experience at a real level and assume personal responsibility for the outcome. The initial stages of a drama are crucial to its success. Chizik (1990) states, “students must be eased from a spectator mode to an experiential mode” (p13).

O’Neill (1989) points out that “there is a social energy which facilitates learning” (p87). She writes that this energy should be tapped in the classroom for “the visible presence of a social context, creates in individuals the need to be at one with it and with each other” (p45). Teachers should be able to manipulate this group energy to help build belief and commitment to the drama. Heathcote also uses this energy. For instance, she may create a hostile situation in which the class oppose her or each other.

The teacher in drama education employs theatre elements and the art form as strategies, skills, and as a method for learning so that the teacher must be knowledgeable about theatre elements. Bolton (1989) states that “the very clarity of the dramatic medium to do with focus, symbolism, tension, resonance, ambiguity, contradiction, ritual, simplicity, contrast, anticipation, resolution, completeness and incompleteness, humour, magic, ambiguity and metaxis can be employed in dramatic play” (p89).

For me, employing theatre elements was innovative. As teacher in or out of role one has many avenues to get at meanings. David Davis refers to the meaning system as signs. Signs create images “that hold and resonate the meaning of the play” (Neelands, 1989). During Bolton’s summer course he used as a sign of disability the slight inturn of the foot for the guest in “The Architect Students” (see chapter four).

As a teacher using this method I needed to be aware of the existence and power of signs and how to manipulate them. Davis (1988) categorizes signs: context, role, costume, gesture, dramatic action, lighting, music, non-verbal sounds, movement, objects, images and words. Bolton finds a symbol or sign to stand for the abstract notion at the heart of the drama. He begins dramatic playing by using this notion. For example, Bolton began “The Monastery” role drama by having students find a noise that would resonate as a monastery door would have done hundreds of years ago. This sound could symbolize for students ownership of the drama, and be a trigger for entering a different time and place.

Every drama situation can provide many avenues of entry. Teachers must decide which one aspect should be examined. As the drama progresses another focus may be chosen. For a thorough examination of an issue, many different focuses can be employed. Eisner (1985) states

it is characteristic of the nature of man that he is not limited to one specific and single approach to reality but can choose his point of view and so pass from one aspect of things to another.

Once a focus for the drama has been chosen, a metaphor must be decided on: “a situation, image or context which will resonate the chosen focus for children” (Neelands, 1984, p67). Metaphor sets the scene and may contrast something familiar with something unfamiliar. Neelands uses the example of children around a campfire on the planet Mars. The familiarity of the campfire contrasted with the unfamiliarity of Mars stimulates the individual to form new perspectives.

Eisner (1975) believes that

metaphor breaks the bonds of conventional usage to exploit the power of connotation and analogy. It capitalized on surprise by putting meanings into new combinations and through such combinations awakens our senses (p225).

Once the scene is established, it is of prime importance to capture the interest, commitment, and belief of students. This can be achieved through the use of tension. Teachers will discover that the drama will easily unfold once tension is firmly established. This can be done by introducing a controversial issue and challenging one student to take sides, defending his/her views regarding this issue. The rest of the class will naturally take sides on the issue, creating an environment of tension. This activity helps to promote in the students an emotional attachment to the drama.

Bolton places significance on the use of symbols and rituals as a way into meaning and emotional commitment. Providing rituals in drama can help students commit themselves to the drama. Rituals provide significance to everyday events. As Morgan and Saxton (1985) state, "the use of ritual by its high structured form and economical nature binds meaning together for the group" and "provides opportunities for participating with the collective experience those things that relate to their life experiences to reveal new understandings" (p65). During the summer, Bolton used family rituals (family portraits) and church rituals (church gatherings) for these purposes. They proved most effective.

Rituals also slow down action and help students to take a deeper, longer look at issues. Learning is enhanced through the conscious manipulation of time. Awareness of the use of space can provide a setting that is functional and facilitate the quality of the drama. The use of space can also facilitate entry into imaginary worlds; “we can enter and walk about in or represent meanings physically” (Neelands, 1984, p74). Bolton has students rearrange space continually. Students take ownership of the drama and take the first steps into the experience because they have created the space themselves.

Using theatre elements to teach drama education is a very different experience from teaching a skills based program. As teacher I no longer can stand on the outside and direct. I had to create learning experiences that did not limit students to theatre skills or personal development only but incorporated personal, universal and analogous understandings through the art form. I had to evoke direction from within.

Drama in education concerns talk. I now had to be more aware of this talk and aware of ways that I could foster development of language. Bolton (1989) points out that drama “helps give shape to thought” (p69). Verriour (1985) adds that the creation of dramatic dialogue is important to unscripted spoken drama because it makes special cognitive and linguistic demands on students. Booth (1989) writes that the power of language can also be realized by the collective drive for group meaning. Students negotiate meaning through language.

Language development can be enhanced by writing in role (ie. letters, diaries), writing text from different time periods as well as reflection in journals. Oral language can also

be fostered by using formal, informal language, different time periods, different social spheres or occasions calling for different forms of language.

Morgan and Saxton (1985) point out various methods to enrich language development. It can be used in planning, speculating, predicting, listening, organizing, mapping, storytelling, sequencing, narrating, interviewing, and questioning, asking for information, persuading, reporting, tape recording, elaborating, reasoning, criticizing, and evaluating. Language occasions can be facilitated to enable “deep level thought such as expatiation, negotiation, clarification, explanation, persuasion and prediction” (p80). Teachers-in-role can model language for students. Teachers need to be aware of language occasions in terms of style, language, tone, logic and content. Bolton had students in the summer course create formal text in role. Students were allowed to write only two lines which would indicate a final decision in “The Monastery” drama. This is described in greater detail in Chapter Four of this study.

Drama in education places great emphasis on the expertise of the teacher. The transition from teaching a skills based methodology to this one can be challenging, but once the hurdle has been overcome, teaching drama in education can be a rewarding experience. Hopefully, teachers will have a clearer vision of what drama in this program can be and the many areas of possible learning available through it. I trust they will also be made aware of the important use of theatre elements and performance mode. This may enable secondary high school teachers in drama to develop and implement educational drama.

The learning and wisdom that can be discerned for students far surpasses what can be encountered through the old approach. Personal development, social skills, language development, moral development and personal knowledge are all cultivated and connected through the experience of the theatre art form.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGNS OF STUDY

The heart of the study was to construct the events of the year in the form of a diary focusing on the drama activities and the responses of both students and myself to those activities. I was seeking, as teacher and researcher, the “deeper structure of social events, the rules or modes that give them order” (Eisner, 1985, p225). Through the medium of a diary, this study attempts to provide an understanding of the year, and apply significance to it.

At the onset I couldn’t help pondering some of the following thoughts:

How would the students in drama 10 and acting 11/12 react to this new approach?

Would it be difficult for me to leave behind my years of experience and training?

How well could I implement an approach I was not completely sure of?

How would the change effect the learning outcomes of my students who had to demonstrate artistic expertise by performing in various school plays throughout the year, and would I jeopardize their ability to compete artistically?

Would I be able to leave behind old learning objectives such as blocking, concentration, and character in place of the possibilities of realizing universal truths?

How would the students react to reflecting in journals and focusing on discussion?

How would the students respond to me as a co-learner?

How successful would drama in education prove to be?

Selection Of Site

My classroom proved to be the most appropriate site for the study. The students and I were comfortable in this setting, and could work as naturally as any other year. My classroom is a typical drama room, larger than the average class, and located in the middle of the school on the second floor. It has large windows, a view of the mountains, and is light and airy. The room is carpeted, and has only my desk and stacked chairs in it.

The classroom is situated in an average secondary school located in a residential area of mainly working class families. There are about 900 students in the school and the majority are of an ethnic background — Italian, Croatian, Chinese, East Indian. There

is a very large special education component in the school and there are about 55 staff members.

The school staff as well as administration at the school and district levels were very supportive of this research study.

Selection Of Subjects

Of the 126 students enrolled in drama classes, the grade ten class consisted of twenty-five students and the grade eleven/twelve class consisted of twenty-two students. The drama class was an elective and most students had previously been exposed to some form of drama education. One class member was an English as a Second Language student. About five members of class were regular students in the special education department. About five students wanted to pursue acting as a career. About the same number viewed drama class as a time where social activities would be encouraged while the majority enjoyed learning and participating in a non-academic class. Students were informed of the change in drama education this year and were told that their perceptions would form part of my research analysis.

Research Role

Having taught at this school for three years students were accustomed to me and my expectations, standards and style. Although I was changing my teaching role from “ex-

pert” to facilitator and co-learner, students did not appear to feel a drastic change in relating to me.

As teacher-in-role I assumed various roles in dramatic playing in order to stimulate a belief and commitment in the student. Through these roles, questioning strategies, the use of various theatre elements and reflection I provided a basis for learning to take place.

Dramatic playing also provided an entry into script work which is an integral part of the drama/acting program. I selected plays, assisted with the direction of scene work and assessed that work in conjunction with student self-evaluations.

As a percipient (participant-observer), I participated in the activities, but I also observed how I was reacting to situations and how students were reacting to them. As the year progressed, I reassessed my plan to be flexible to the needs of students and reconsidered whether it was best to adhere to this new approach to drama.

While I had my students writing in journal entries each period, I also wrote in my journal about my feelings, observations, and analyses of each class. My role, therefore, as percipient and teacher-in-role was very similar to and paralleled the students’ activities.

Data Collection

As a percipient, I observed students in my drama ten and acting eleven/twelve class taking part in discussions in and out of role. Students wrote in journals reflecting on the activities as well as any new feelings, thoughts, and understandings that those activities stimulated. Journal writing included both personal reflections and answering predetermined questions.

I included interviewing as part of my sampling strategy. The interviews were both informal and in-depth. The informal interviews included conversations with students after class or whenever the time permitted. The in-depth interviewing involved predetermined questions that students answered at the end of the year concerning their responses to the program in general.

My journal was also used as part of the data collection. Journal entries focused on planning, observations of my students and how I was coping as a teacher and an individual. Educational drama relies heavily on the skill of the teacher for its success. I analyzed how I was adjusting to this new approach. I analyzed the commitment and level of student participation and learning outcomes based on individual needs. Because I worked with students at the grade eleven/twelve level I also observed and assessed the quality of their performance mode and understanding and use of theatre elements. My students' journal entries were used to obtain feedback for future lesson plans. I began recording journal entries at the onset of school, September 8th, 1990 and concluded at the end of the school year June 14th, 1991.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

My diary included an overview of the year chronicling the ups and downs as well as the interactions of activities and students. The diary also focused on my observations along with student reactions and my analyses of those responses.

The diary was a review of how I came to harness group energy and use it to develop student commitment, belief, and concentration. It describes how I struggled from falling back into using the old approach at the beginning and it reveals the plans, thoughts, feelings, apprehensions, delights, confusion, and irritations of a year of implementing educational drama. Finally, the diary reveals the satisfaction and confidence I acquired through this challenge.

As educational drama relies so heavily on the expertise of the teacher I analyzed my own development as a teacher. This included the changes that I had to go through, the new training and outlook I had to incorporate into my teaching methodology, and the openness I had to display towards unpredictable learning experiences. I examined how successful I could be in providing dramatic playing experiences for the class. Finally, I examined if I was able to meet the curriculum demands, especially in performance mode, and remain true to the educational drama focus.

Diary Of A Year Of Discovery

Term I — September To November

This journey is one of discovery. I will be stopping along the way for reflection. I will not cover every detail of the trip, but reflect on the memorable moments. As with most journeys, especially those that one has not embarked on before, it began with a feeling of excitement and apprehension. What adventures would I encounter? Where would I end up? Would the journey be a success? With these thoughts in mind, I set forth.

After the initial excitement of the course with Gavin Bolton and the decision to change my approach to teaching drama, the reality of September set in. I found myself continuing to think in terms of the old learning objectives when it came to actually teaching. It was difficult to let go of trying to teach concentration, mime, blocking and motivation. I had to think in terms of content. I had to be open to the experience and knowledge and direction of my students. I had to allow events to flow and trust my intuitive understanding of direction. I had to encourage student interest and involvement. I also had to know when we were really off track and had to get back into the original flow. Teaching was not a clear, concise, concrete, tool, but an exploration, a journey which I had to set markers on but many discoveries could be made along the way. I had to trust myself and my students. This was a new experience and it was not going to be an easy adjustment.

Some of the students who were the “performers” last year wanted to continue with the success they had. They were also disturbed by the lack of clear objectives and the idea

alone that we would not be “doing theatre sports”. Many of the others, however, were open and ready to try something new.

I began the journey with Bolton’s “The Architect” (1990). I realized just how important it was to establish the first drama with certain attitudes toward behavior, my role, student role and the kind of learning experience it was to be. I sat students in a circle and explained to them the new form of drama I was trying to implement this year and what my expectations were. I told them about my excitement toward the new course and how I, as a student at the University of B.C. last summer, had enjoyed participating in the same activities they would be participating in.

The importance of the entire group participating, the importance of each individual in the success of the drama and the importance of giving the experience a chance was stressed. I was nervous. I knew what I was doing, and yet I still had some misgivings. I glanced back and then continued.

The Architect

As pointed out by Bolton (1985), it is a good idea to initiate the experience of dramatic playing by not straying too far from reality. Therefore, my students remained students, but they were architect students at university. As teacher-in-role I was the professor welcoming my class and instructing them about the examination they were about to begin. I explained very clearly in role with a different tone of voice and mannerisms, that they would have a guest coming today. This guest was a handicapped person who would assist them in answering their questions about how to design the school building

so that it would be accessible to a handicapped person. I told them that their questions would be considered as part of the examination and marks would be given for the quantity and quality. This last step was necessary to ensure participation, and it was a way of building a belief in what was occurring.

I explained to a student of that class that he would be the guest and that he should not “act” as if he was physically handicapped but merely not use his lower body or his right hand when answering questions. One foot was to be slightly twisted.

Questioning began slowly and so I found it necessary to ask a limited number of questions myself as an example to the students.

Students felt confused and did not really understand how they should behave. Slowly, as more and more questions were being asked I could note a shift in the direction of the class. They no longer felt confused about their roles, but were interested and involved in the activity: how could one design a building for the handicapped?

Students later noted that it was my example with my commitment and belief in my role which assisted them in creating their own belief. Even more important to building belief was the symbol of being handicapped — the slight twist of the foot and the limp arm — which triggered students into believing in the situation. After this was established, students went beyond thinking of what was happening and became involved in the issue.

Discussion ended the period. It revolved around the difficulties handicapped individuals have, how many of the class had never thought of this before and how they felt differently toward the handicapped now. As some of the students were leaving they continued to give me suggestions about how the building could be designed to accommodate the handicapped better. At the end of the day one of my students came back to my room and said "Thanks, it was a wonderful lesson".

The lesson was to end with the students actually designing a building. Bolton did not have us do this in the summer and I felt it unnecessary to do now. Students were frustrated that they could not design the building. I was pleasantly surprised to have students angry at not being allowed to do an assignment.

After the role drama was complete I asked for journal assignments from the students for the first time. My questions were: How was this experience different from anything you did last year? What happened to you in this experience?

Overwhelmingly, students felt there was no comparison to last year. This experience was fun, but also focused and had a real purpose. Students were surprised, confused and thrilled at how "real" the experience was and how the entire class was committed to the drama. One student had come to class late and thought a real interview was taking place.

I was happy that discipline problems had disappeared as the focus of the class increased. Class cohesiveness was prominent, and students had learned about an issue. They developed opinions toward this issue and used their problem solving skills to think of how

to help. A successful introduction to role drama had occurred and I felt happy. Student responses in journal entries reflected this success.

Student Responses:

Linda acting 11 — I felt this lesson was the best one I have ever experienced in an acting class. I learnt so much and enjoyed doing it so much. The feeling was incredible, It was so intense and incredibly realistic. I really hope to do more in the future. I think the difference in acting lessons was so much better, theatre sports etc. are fun to play but there is absolutely nothing learned by these continuous games. As for the lesson learned . . . it was interesting dynamic, intense, fun and extremely amazing. How much I learned about theatre.

Shelly grade 10 — I thought it was really fun and serious . . . My reaction to the event was amazed at the way that the people really thought and cared about handicapped people . . . I really thought about how handicapped people must feel to be wrapped up in a wheel chair all the time, because it made me feel like a nothing. (he played the handicapped person)

Rachelle drama 10 — Yesterday I think drama class was one of the strangest things I have ever experienced ever. It was such an experience to feel like every thing was happening and it was real. We were all architect students and we did have a handicapped person came in and see us. That is exactly what it felt like. We were not acting. I was not in a drama class any more. The whole feeling in the room changed. it was brilliant. I loved it . . . I felt like I learned something

yesterday. The most important thing in acting I think, is to change character, your not yourself your an architect and then just act natural. I hope that drama class will continue to be like yesterdays class.

The success of the first role drama gave me the confidence I needed to continue even though some of the acting 11/12 students started saying that role dramas were boring and that they wanted to do fun things like last year. These students were a distinct minority but they were some of the students who had experienced success before, loved the class, and usually had not had a lot of success in school beyond drama.

The Monastery

By the time I had introduced “The Monastery” (Bolton, 1990) drama in October we had journeyed through a number of short dramas and trust activities. Students were becoming familiar with what to expect, and what behavior was necessary. They realized the importance of commitment and participation by all members of the class. I was feeling the heavy responsibility of beginning a new drama. I was beginning to realize that teaching in this approach required a new set of skills and perceptions. It seemed overwhelming.

This drama was to be the first one that encompassed a longer period of time. It amounted to about one and a half months. It was important to introduce it properly. Belief is built slowly and does not come easily. Commitment and focus only develop after belief has existed. It was important to have the whole class involved in initial activities with the teacher directing them closely. It was also important to get students to take

ownership of their role which usually involved having each student individually acknowledge something to the class.

It was imperative that concise economical language be used in the introductory narration. Too much talk and the students are put off and find the activity boring. However, too little narration can result in the proper mood not being set. After a brief introduction of period and situation, I used detail to begin the process of building belief. Time, weather, grain of wood, or clothing helped to personalize the situation.

The teacher's choice of language is vital in this process. In order to be part of the sixteenth century setting in a monastery, one needed to use formal and religious language. The teacher's language use sets the tone for the language that students should then engage in. This was effective in developing the language of students as well as helping them be aware of different styles of language.

Students were able to take ownership of the drama early as they had to create the setting through the use of space. Students placed chairs uniformly in a semi-circle with the pulpit at the opening. A door had to be used for the entrance of the stranger and a knock had to be found which would represent the stranger's entrance into the monastery. The use of space — chairs, door and anti-chamber — were signals for the students. Students not only assumed ownership but came to realize the importance of space and the meaning it could create. The uniform symmetry of the chairs demanded formality. It was a trigger which meant this space was a place of order, tradition and social structure. The importance of using all the senses to help build belief must be stressed. The sound of the knock was another important trigger.

Once the setting was firmly established the individual students needed to feel a part of the drama. This was created by having each student pick an occupation that he/she would have as a monk in a monastery (e.g. copying the Bible, working in the fields, making wine, etc). Students actively participated by telling the class who they were. This, therefore, was not only a trigger for themselves but for others entering into the drama.

Structure, choosing a role, accepting the responsibility for that role, and finally creating a tension results in an atmosphere in which belief can begin. In life, significance is given to space. Therefore, a significance must be given to space in theatre and, when it is, a theatrical moment is reached.

The initial activities needed to focus on building belief and gaining control in the classroom. Once this has been established, individual ownership could begin to exist. Since success had been achieved in the first activities, it was not necessary for me to direct the next exercise. While the abbot was away the monks gossiped amongst themselves about what the stranger had done to necessitate his desire to stay at the monastery. This exercise was a way of showing me the level of commitment on the part of the students. It also increased belief by handing over responsibility to the students. The atmosphere, code of behavior, and commitment level allowed the next step to be successful.

Tableau was a new concept for my students and for me. A frozen picture is created which symbolizes through theatre elements concepts, issues or events. A total of three tableaux were created in "The Monastery". The first two represented events and rela-

tionships, and the last one introduced abstract concepts. Students enjoyed creating and participating in tableaux as well as interpreting what each other had created.

The classroom was like a wax museum. The students, other than those in each respective tableau, were the audience. As audience they were to observe and analyze the tableaux. Stress was placed on audience interpretation and making sense of the tableaux, not the acting ability of the students. The audience has the responsibility for interpretation. The work is done by the audience not the performers. Reading a tableau is like reading a page of print and the subtext. Students had to think hard in order to narrow events or concepts into one final product which would get at the heart of the subject matter. Work was technically done in dramatic form but the product was controlled, effective and economical. The result was art. Tableaux were engaging to look at and examine. They created a hint of competitiveness between groups. The results were usually very powerful.

Student Responses:

Pat grade 10 — Yesterdays tableaux were very sophisticated and realistic. I thought they looked like a real picture. It was almost eerie how real people froze and looked like a photograph. They portrayed very subtle hints of what was going on. I was impressed that everyone was serious and participated. The concentration really made it work. Facial expressions expressed very good and showed true emotions.

Another scene in this sequence involved partners. The stranger and a monk were together in the ante-chamber. It was suggested that perhaps the monk saw the stranger's confession as a means of proving his worth to the abbot or perhaps the monk was truly interested in saving the soul of the stranger. Students chose their motivation for the persuasion. The learning objective I was trying to achieve in the exercise was to reveal that sometimes a person acts responsibly but for the wrong reasons. In fact the learning took a road by itself as discussion after the activity concerned how one persuades another, how one can make another person feel comfortable enough to build trust, and how understanding another person can foster compatibility. We spoke of these learning in terms of job interviews. One should respond to another without one's own agenda clouding the issue.

My journal question did not cover these particular issues and I found myself wondering what journal questions I should be asking. Was I fostering learning or confining it by my choice of questions? I felt, many times, at a loss with regard to questioning.

Student Responses:

Rhonda grade 10 — I felt that I had so much feeling towards the monk and I really did sin. I could feel a lot of emotion towards the monk and myself. I felt guilty and wanted to get it out of myself. The monk was really understanding and told me a lot about the monastery and how people felt in it and how peaceful it is from the real world. I felt comforted.

Jackie grade 12 — This exercise made me realize that in order to make someone feel comfortable enough to release some inner feelings or thought you must be able to give an image that you have some understanding and/or insight and you mirror these feeling when you are speaking with someone.

Alvis grade 11 — My sessions of confession on a moonlight night. I think of ways to tell the truth and it makes me want to have truth. The guilt in me makes me cry out. I really want to try. Every day and night I think of what I've done. After that I want to run. Running from my life can't run no more till I find the chance to open the door.

The final scene in "The Monastery" involved writing a two line script. Each character could say one line. As in the tableau, the economical use of words and elements was necessary. The correct form of language was necessary. Not only did students have to think in terms of directing the scene using space, tension, and symbol, but they also had to create appropriate and economical language.

After the lines were created and the writers had envisioned how they would be directed, the script was given to another group to perform. Finally, the scriptwriters would perform their own scripts.

Before this activity the class brainstormed the learning aspects of the drama: responsibility, consequences, decision making, ambivalence, compassion, hierarchy, lifestyle, isolation, religion.

These aspects were to be incorporated into the scene as well as the prince making his final decision. Action over language was stressed. This activity focused on understanding and implementing theatre elements with the understanding that it was the theatre elements and not the acting ability of students which portrayed meaning. It was then up to the audience to endow the actor with the right feelings which the actors would eventually feel.

Student Responses:

Ruth grade 11 — I learned what it is like to be under a large amount of pressure when making a decision that will affect you for the rest of your life. This activity enabled me to act out characters that contrasted.

Randy grade 11 — . . . Before we started, I knew absolutely nothing about a monastery and how one functioned. I could never picture a monastery in my head before now.

Tara grade 11 — Ever since we started this monastery project I have been more curious at the types of people that live in them. I have wondered who they are and why and how they received their magical and powerful bonding with God. Even though I do not believe in God I think that our work was beautiful and touching.

Mike grade 10 — I thought that working the Monastery was quite interesting. This being my first time in drama I enjoyed it. Sometimes it was a little diffi-

cult to think of line and actions, but once they were chosen, everyone seemed to do it quite naturally. At certain times the feelings flowing in the class were so strong that it really did seem true to life . . . I forgot that this was only a class and not a monastery. Although some people fooled around sometimes, most people, I think could feel that it was more than 'pretending'. The way some groups posed in tableaux, and acted out scenes, showed all of the different feelings and aspects of the Monastery. I thought that was the most interesting thing; how different people expressed their feelings and the different roles they decided to play and the ways in which they played them. I think that a lot of emotion was put into this project by almost everyone, and as a result, I think it turned out nicely. So far I have enjoyed the class very much.

I had initially tried to make "The Monastery" relevant to students by introducing a parallel contemporary situation. A very intense discussion followed this and the drama got off on a good start. Soon though, students found the drama tedious. They found life very boring in a monastery. They enjoyed the new activities introduced but found the content unstimulating. I found it very difficult to continue especially as the drama continued for so long. I began to lose confidence in this approach thinking perhaps that the students would find it boring and I would find it increasingly difficult to direct. We were all glad when the entire drama concluded. I was happy to introduce a short activity next. I felt students had acquired enough knowledge of theatre elements to be able to try a "chair tableau".

This is a Love Story

The chair tableau is an activity that uses limitations to create a powerful concise impact. Students are given three chairs which they can position any way they like. They must remain immobile from the waist down throughout the scene. A passage is read and movements created to symbolize the meaning of the passage. Before the students enact the text the class directs three students in the scene. A demonstration is usually necessary in the beginning of a new concept. Teacher's serious intent, tone of voice and ability to read the script well enables students to commit to the drama.

We did "This is a Love Story" (Bolton, 1990). The surprising aspect of this activity was the focus and industriousness of the students. Last year's group activity entailed a noisy, unfocused looking class. Now group work was quiet and concentrated. The tone of the class paralleled that of an academic class. One student wrote: "I was amazed at the concentration level of the class; I have not seen that before."

The limitations placed on the students forced them to think at a deeper level to create meaning. They had to truly grasp the use of theatre elements when each small detail such as the focus of the eye could create powerful meanings. It forced students to be aware of theatre elements in a way they had never envisioned before. Less activity and more in depth analysis forced a deeper understanding of theatre. Space, time, tension, and symbol were magnified. The content of the story was clarified for many only after the activity was completed. This was an effective way in which to interpret and understand text. This was a much better entry into script than anything I have previously introduced.

Student Responses:

Nancy grade 10 — Chair dramas are cool. They take little physical effort but a lot of thinking and heart. I think these dramas are worth while. I learned that not a lot of movement doesn't matter really, it actually has more impact and dramatics.

Christa grade 10 — The love story was a story about life. In life having to make very painful choices and along with that came the sacrifice and consequences. Love is very confusing and painful.

This activity proved very exciting to both the students and me. It proved successful to do some short activities after a very long one. I found this activity made me feel confident again about educational drama.

It was now November and some students who were giving the new approach a chance were beginning to miss drama "like last year". They missed the less intense and less academic atmosphere of the previous year. I was really feeling the pressure of being unsure of myself and the new approach. As a result, the negativity of some students put me more at ill ease than it would have in previous years.

I was looking ahead at the rest of the year and it seemed that the expertise and control a teacher needed for this new method could be too much. I wondered how I could keep this up all year, for every class.

Luckily, during this time I attended the provincial drama conference. While there I attended a playbuilding sequence directed by Carol Tarlington. Later, I took my students to see the first of a series of plays at the Vancouver Playhouse. This particular one was “A Streetcar Named Desire”. Due to the issues in the play and events that occurred during the viewing of the play, my students became very focused on it. I decided to alter my plans which included having students memorize scenes from the play. Instead, I had them create a playbuilding sequence about the issues surrounding the play. This turned out to be a astute decision.

Playbuilding — A Streetcar Named Desire

Class directed and generated script work is very beneficial, relevant, and fun for students. Normally, students pick themes or issues they are interested in and come up with a play that they can present to an audience. They come to understand the issue better and learn the elements of theatre in this exercise.

It was during the viewing of the play “A Streetcar Named Desire” that a portion of the audience applauded the rape scene in the play. There was much controversy over this and letters to the theatre as well as to the newspaper followed. Some of my students were very heated about the response of the audience as well as the issues covered in the play. I decided that since students were so focused on the play perhaps it would be a better learning experience to have students create a play about this play instead of having them memorize and present scenes from the play. The students loved the idea and came up with wonderful suggestions, ideas, improvisations, and final product. Their final product was presented not only to other classes, but also to the entire staff at a staff

meeting. The staff, many of whom were oblivious to what goes on in an acting class, were pleasantly surprised at the level of ability, concentration, and understanding that the students demonstrated. I had never produced a class written play before and was amazed at the ease with which it was created. The learning experience was invaluable. Some of the toughest boys in the school were in the class and they came to the staff meeting and did a wonderful job in fulfilling their part in the play. Teachers were surprised at my ability to get these students to participate. But, when one starts from the student's perspective and interest, it is easy to encourage participation. Students thought so too.

Student Responses:

From a student who had been abused and has abused others — I learned that making a play is hard work that when other people performed their play I was touch and know and when I performed my scene I felt that abuse is a sensitive subject and this make me feel happier that know that we are doing a short play about to make people aware of this subject.

Rick — I think that by taking a deeper look at the play it helped us all understand the issues a lot better. By understanding the issues I think it helped us to create our play with a lot better understanding of what went on in the lay . . . I made it believable to myself first which made it believable to the audience.

Tammy grade 11 — Throughout all these activities pertaining to the streetcar I have enjoyed them I have learned new ways to express the feelings of another.

I have learned about themes and how to express simple or complex situations. Also performing with a whole class was good because we were all involved and we go to have our ideas integrated within the play and came up with a successful production.

Leah grade 11 — It is very fun using your imagination, and showing it on stage. It is sad realizing how people feel and how much they're going through and that they hold it all in. I learnt that people feel no matter what they say or however they react around others. We all feel pain love embarrassment, etc. but not all of us have the power or knowledge or the maturity to show it in life. The words we are using are extremely powerful and the signs that are coming out of them are unpredictable and really make you think.

Sharon — (alcoholic father) grade 11 — During this playbuilding scene I felt that people played out what they felt they thought the characters went through. They played out not just scenes themselves from the play but issues deeper down. For example our group did abuse. We played out the three kinds of abuse we felt Blanche went through. In the play, we saw how she was physically abused, but translated it to mean that the cause of her mental instability and her liquor abuse was caused by this physical abuse. I felt that if Blanche would have been put into a stable life after the death of Allen she would have gotten mentally better. The physical abuse by Stanley drove her into deeper insanity.

Joanne grade 11 — . . . was incredibly powerful. Through the class activities we have learned about numerous issues and discussed them. This play made me

aware of how serious the issues of abuse really are. During class through number of skits we have performed I have learned that everyone feels somewhat the same and has different ways of showing their interpretations.

The following are lines that the students wrote and improvised into the playbuilding sequence:

Abuse is like death to the heart

Death the opposite of desire

It is one thing to build a castle in the sky, but it is another to live in it.

Hope is an eternal struggle

Passion is a crime of the heart.

Alcohol is a temporary escape from reality.

Reality is defined by fantasies

Rape is a violation of the soul

Survival of the fittest

Betrayal leads to isolation

Magic is the shield from reality

Sexuality is a root to power.

One student chose to say “Poker should not be played in a room with women”. He liked to be controversial and appear tough. During various practises it became evident that he was uncomfortable with this statement as it was not as serious as the others. Finally, on the day of the performance he came running up to me and asked if he could change his statement. He then came up with a statement as serious and thoughtful as the others and looked satisfied. He had monitored himself; the issues had gotten to him too.

Term II — December to March

November and December slipped by, thanks to the playbuilding sequence. I was happy that the holidays were coming and apprehensive that I was going to direct and produce the school play in the new year. January would bring a much heavier work load.

January arrived and the students and I were rested. I was to introduce Arthur Millar’s “The Crucible”. I was feeling more comfortable with my role and felt more at ease with the skills necessary to do this approach.

The Crucible

The importance of clear, concise, economical narration and correct tone of voice and manner were stressed once again to introduce the story and history surrounding The “Crucible”. The play has been considered unreadable by many English teachers. They had found that the text was too dry, and the students became very bored. Yet surprisingly, many of the themes in the play have to do with issues pertinent to students’ lives. Witchcraft, court procedures, affairs and peer pressure are of vital interest to students. This wonderful text needed to come alive and have relevance to my students. The role drama served as an introduction to the text and provided the impetus that allowed students to explore these issues. As Paula in Acting 11 stated after doing one of the role drama activities, “I would love to see the whole play.” In fact all the students in my classes from grade nine to twelve enjoyed reading the entire script.

After an initial summary of the story and history two lines were written on the board

Elizabeth “What keeps you? It’s almost dark.”

Dave — “I were planting far out to the forest’s edge.”

Again the entire class had a chance to direct two people creating a scene from the lines. This activity proved to be one of the most rewarding of the entire year. I had previously given students scripts involving pages and pages of lines. Although we would go over blocking, motivation and character etc. I have never seen students get to the heart of the matter — understanding the text, relating to it, responding to it and using such economical theatre elements to convey meaning. For each class an entire period was spent

directing only two lines. The students were thoroughly engrossed and by the end of the period when we had finally realized the direction and had an understanding of what was occurring the students and I felt elated.

Journal entries consisted of learning such as:

Wanda — It amazes me that so many people can create such different versions of the same two lines. It is also amazing to me that there really is no right way to do or interpret something when it comes to setting, blocking and acting out a scene.

Teresa — The scenes about John and Elizabeth were quite moving even though it was the same two lines it was interpreted in many different ways. The lines were like clay we had to mold.

Brenda — Out of the same two lines every one had their own interpretation using a sense of imagination, different styles and meanings, and each play was full of emotions and feelings being expressed throughout the scenes. You could not only see and hear it you can feel it.

Tara — Doing this scene really forced me to put myself in the character and feel exactly the way John felt as he lied to his wife — guilty. I enjoy doing these types of activities where you can watch everyone else's interpretation of a scene using the same line and circumstances. I learned a lot by watching other people act.

Peter — I thought the activity with John and Elizabeth was very emotional. While acting or sitting watching you can feel the intensity and emotion between the two. You can picture and really tell what the two of them are going through. The different points of view came across really well. I thought all of the interpretations were really well done.

Intense discussion surrounded the issue of the role of women during this time, the state of marriage, affairs, guilt, and innocence. For the Acting 11/12 students theatre knowledge was also advanced. Mona stated one thing she learned in this area;

I really enjoyed doing the directing of the two lines, but it bothers me that a director can take a writer's play and totally change the story line of the plays when they direct them. It does not seem fair. I guess what bothers me the most is I enjoyed it so much.

What was exciting for me as a teacher was that an understanding of people in different times and situations was realized, and theatre knowledge was being expanded while students were in dramatic play mode. Lisa in grade 10 was not used to this experience. She thought acting was "intellectualizing and performing". About a scene that involved the same two lines but this time with the addition of a narrator who relates the subtext of what is occurring Sandra wrote;

I thought that this scene was kinda neat to do. It was kind of strange because when we performed it in front of the class, it wasn't the same as we practised it and no one knew because we just went along with what the narrator said. I was

the same Elizabeth and I kind of felt like something was actually happening inside of me and same with Diana as John. I think the most pressure was on the narrator. I understand that it is really difficult for the narrator and I am glad our's pulled through even though it wasn't what we practised.

Another activity that involved the same two lines was one that was initiated by the class. A lot of discussion revolved around the issue of women's and men's roles during the time of "The Crucible". The girls felt very confined by their roles and found it difficult to accept the roles. Students felt very happy that women's roles had changed and wanted to direct the same lines in contemporary times to contrast and compare the behavior of the role of women. These entries resulted;

Rick — When we did the two lines in drama it was different than most other things done. When we did the old scene, the scene was more formal. The roles of the characters were finely defined. It was as though we were machines, doing there things as the day would go everyday. When we did the modern scene, I feel we had no true meaning, no definite roles. Before everything was picture perfect, now they are a pile of leaves.

Wayne — Back then it was a different atmosphere around everywhere. Their was no luxuries or anything. They all talked in a different way. No one couldn't do anything in those days women can do anything they want now. Men had more power back then. They still have power now. It was fun.

Sheryl — When I was doing it, in the olden days one, I knew I couldn't do nothing to my husband, but in the modern one, I am the one that came home from work and it was so different, because I was allowed to be mad in the modern one than the older days one cause if the man did something wrong you could not do anything.

Mary — I found that in the older days skits, the women had very little power, where as in the modern day skits the women had the power to kick the men out if that was their best interest. In some of the skits I could feel the anger of the women and how she hated the man. Also in others I felt the guilt of the man and how he wanted to not allow the woman to know what had really happened. When I was doing the one from the past I became Elizabeth and used my experiences from life. When I am confused I run away and hide what I am feeling as best as possible. And when I am mad, I allow my anger to explode at once.

In order to accomplish an activity which involved having each character narrate his/her own subtext during the two line scene I had students write out the subtext in their journals. These took many forms. This is a good example of incorporating writing into role drama and how effective it can be. The first student is extroverted and non-academic.

Dave — Elizabeth is preparing dinner while John is in the forest. Elizabeth is preparing soup. She is not concentrating on what she is doing. All she can think about is her marriage with John and that tramp Abigail. The pressure was too much for her to handle so she stopped. and sat at the table bringing with her the uncooked soup. She sat there for just a few minutes but it seemed as though she

sat there for hours. Suddenly, she heard the slight closing of a door. She wanted to get up and scream but she decided to keep herself calm. She saw the shadow of her unloyal husband. He walked to the table, sat down and prayed. John could not pray, he wanted to confess his sins but then he would be laughed at. Elizabeth stood up and served the soup. John took a spoonful and then Elizabeth asked "What keeps you? It's almost dark." John takes another spoonful and then says "I were planting far out to the forests's edge." John takes another spoonful. Elizabeth stood up and cursed him with her eyes and walked off.

Marla — Liz anticipated the moment that John would walk through the door. Her thoughts grew of John with Abigail. How she despised her. She hastily bustled about the house trying to calm herself of the pain and anguish that filled her heart. She heard the distinct sound of a door unlocking, she tilted her head. John quietly walked in trying not to be noticed. He sauntered into the kitchen where Elizabeth stood stirring a pot of stew a thousand thought flew through his head she tried so very hard to withhold asking where he was. She stiffly walked to the table where she set two plates, She served two bowls of stew but could think of nothing but the fact that John was with Abigail. She knew, he had to have been. If he was not then where was he? She sat intensely she kept putting the question to the back of her mind but it pushed like a strong wind. Finally she blurted out "What keeps you? It is almost dark." John looked up in amazement he knew she knew where he was he felt anger and guilt maybe she did not know where he was. Maybe she thought he was working. He put his hands on the table and prayed to stall time between his wife's question and his answer. As he prayed nothing but guilt raced through his head he slowly looked up and stum-

bled “I were planting far out to the forest’s edge.” Elizabeth looked up in disbelief and then began to fiddle with her food. John was very nervous and unable to speak. Liz stood briskly and turned away. John knew he would never be forgiven.

What was exciting about “The Crucible” role drama was that less produced a lot more. Giving students too much to do in terms of activities or script produced less in terms of relevancy, understanding and acquiring theatre knowledge. Variations of the two lines continued for many weeks, and no one was bored. The role drama for the script had not yet begun but students were interested in knowing more. A magnifying glass had been placed on the two lines and many worlds were discovered there. Students were intrigued.

In previous years, I would introduce many unrelated activities that would develop skills such as concentration or movement. In using educational drama, all activities are related and each one helps discover new meaning in the next. An example of this was in the mirror exercises that introduced “The Crucible” role drama. Traditionally, the mirror exercise is an activity to develop concentration with partners mirroring each other’s actions. But this is taken one step further and one person becomes the shadow of the other and movement goes beyond a still position. A particular moment is chosen when the image suddenly distorts the mirror subtly. Choice of timing and quality of distraction is important. Partners are then asked to discuss their feelings during the distortion. The exercise is repeated but this time partners are to be alter egos and the distortions can become quite extensive. The shadow is subtly undermining the partner’s security. The exercise should be done once again with a particular character in mind ie. Elizabeth or

John. The two line scene is then recreated but each character now has a shadow who picks a moment for distortion and a line such as “I won’t do it”. The scene can be recreated again with only the alter egos talking to each other. Here a simple concentration exercise was changed into a piece of theatre which had meaning for the students participating as well as the audience.

“The Crucible” role drama begins with the introduction of a small doll and a narration about witchcraft. The narration ends when I take a pin and stick in through the doll thus introducing the symbol of witchcraft. This is a powerful symbol to trigger students into belief. Each student has held that same doll making the trigger more powerful.

It is difficult for people to relate to other times and situations. The idea of superstitions and witchcraft is alien to many students. Therefore, students were asked to brainstorm a list of superstitions that are in existence today and then initial the ones they adhere to. Students were surprised to realize how many superstitions they believed in or acted upon. As Bolton had done in the summer, I decided to challenge the student who had believed in the least amount of superstitions. I asked students the number of superstitions they had and about three had one or none at all. These students felt very proud to be above these kinds of beliefs. I chose one student who I believed strong enough to be challenged and instead of praising him as he and the class thought because he was not superstitious, I challenged and cornered him into feeling different and alone. He began to feel that he could not justify his beliefs and began to acquiesce to me. Other students in the class became very upset with me or the situation. Everyone felt threatened and this was the experience I was trying to achieve. I told the students that the feelings they were now experiencing were probably similar to what the so called witches felt like in

Salem — different, unwanted, and threatened. Students now had a personal reference point.

Ritual is a very important tool in creating belief and commitment in role drama. Creating a family portrait from the groups of four helped establish each character and their relationship to each other. Having the group create a tableau in the family portrait clarified meaning of the traditional Puritan family.

“The Crucible” was much more exciting for students than the monastery drama. In fact students were looking forward to reading the script. I was relieved about this as my rehearsal time for the school play was depleting my energy. Because of the interest generated by the role drama, I could now sit back and let student interest take over. Two to three periods were taken up by the reading of the script. This time gave me a much needed rest. The younger grades enjoyed the trial scene so much that the students wanted to do a play building sequence that took place in court. We brainstormed ideas that could take place at a trial and enjoyed participating in a courtroom trial for a week. The older grades worked on scripts and memorization of scenes.

Just before the spring break I had some Acting 11/12 students out of class working on their spring production. Some of these students were the ones who appeared to be negative about educational drama. They were now happily working on scripted work and the rest of the class, very positive by now to educational drama, was more comfortable with all members committed. I believe it was due to this that the next activity proved to be the most successful of the year.

Term III — April To June

Forum Theatre

One of the most powerful activities in the acting eleven/twelve class this year occurred during Forum Theatre. Forum theatre involves an issue which is of concern to audience members. A conflict scene is improvised and then reenacted with audience members freezing the action and changing the direction of the conflict to resolve it more effectively.

Two students improvised a scene in which a mother and daughter argued over allowing a drunk boyfriend to stay late at night. The argument got very heated over the issue of fairness. The daughter screamed, “You have boyfriends overnight all the time. I wake up in the morning to strange men in my kitchen. Why can you do it and not me?”

Because the student in actuality was the daughter of a single parent, this issue was of real and utmost importance to her as well as to many of the other members of the class in the same situation. The class was spellbound by the intensity of the argument and how the direction changed with each new entry. One student noted that he has arguments with his parents everyday but he never realized what it looked like from the outside. It was also noted that one has the power to change the nature and direction of a fight. By being personally abusive the fight intensified, but by trying to understand the other person’s perspective the argument lost a lot of heat. The students and I discussed this class at length for many weeks. We found it very powerful and quite a personal learning experience.

May was here and summer was around the bend. I had just finished producing and directing the school play and my students and I were gearing down. This is usually a time of year when students become most restless. Grade twelves especially see the wide world beckoning and have much less commitment to class. I wondered how successful the final drama of the year would be.

All year I had been anticipating this particular drama as it was the one that Laurie and I had created together. The others were all Gavin Bolton's activities. I wanted to see if what we had created would succeed and create an interest and understanding of the play.

I knew that achieving success would be more difficult than achieving the success we had with "The Crucible" because it was the end of the year and the group of students not happy with educational drama were no longer occupied with activities outside the class but would now actually be taking part in these classes.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

This drama (see appendix) encompassed six units that covered the main issues involving love, power, and illusion. As an introduction it was necessary again to utilize the nuances of voice, keep a sense of pacing, 'intuitively read' the class, and maintain an empathy and interest in the experiences of the students. These things were now becoming second nature to me whereas at the beginning of the year I would consciously tell myself to do or watch for certain things. As my confidence grew I found myself leaving the strict formula behind and trusting myself and students to find the direction we would be heading in.

The drama began with a relaxation exercise in which the students had their eyes closed lying on the floor and listened to my narration. Background information on the times and storyline was given to them and music of the times was played simultaneously.

Students were asked to create a map of the forest and draw it according to what they perceived the magical forest to look like. They were to place in it symbols of love, power, and illusion. My students enjoyed doing art work in class and we had quite a discussion about the different choices used. One group made their forest a psychedelic one, and wrote lines to contemporary songs on the map.

A magic potion text of three lines was required and students had to use language appropriate to the times. They enjoyed this activity especially as they had to cast their spells on other class members. We then voted to see which spell had the greatest effect. They enjoyed casting love potions and did not seem to mind that they had created a difficult text.

Again and again the students found the most worthwhile activities had to do with issues relevant to them. These seemed to centre around issues concerning the power of parents. I had the students work in groups of three in which each would pick a role of either student, parent, or counsellor. The ensuing argument between parent and student, and the skill of the counsellor to resolve it stretched the negotiating skills, empathy and understanding of everyone. Students enjoyed seeing how others found solutions to conflicts they all shared.

Student Responses:

Sally — I saw some very real things today. I could relate with a lot of the problems that the groups brought up as I myself have experienced some of the same things.

Tiff — This was an exercise that really hit home for me. It was really strange because lately I have not been getting along with my parents. At first I was going to be the daughter . . . but Sally could not really get into her character so I told her to be me and I would be my own mother. I did not expect it to have so much impact upon her that she would cry. It is because we come from two entirely different households. In mine, I feel never worthy and always sad. In hers she never gets into fights or anything with her parents because she is their perfect child. So actually, I think this was experiencing something new . . . experiencing what I go through and it scared her. Being in my mother's position, I can see how hard it is as much as I could to parent a child. I felt that power though, and understand how my mom has the power and does not want their child to make mistakes. The point is I think this exercise was one of the most difficult for me and I think I can speak for Sally as well to emotionally keep distant because of how we chose to do this. One thing good though . . . I think that Sally understands me more now . . . Why I act the way I do about things. Our lives are so different. Even though we have been best friends for years. I do not think she truly felt my family life or understood some things about me truly until then.

Being a parent, I stood outside of myself for a moment to feel what it must be like to be one of my own children and the experience left me a more understanding parent I am sure.

The tableau exercise that depicted love, power, and illusion revealed to students the female and male 'role' in love and power. Discussion revolved around roles. Many of the tableaux showed women focusing on the male when in love while the male focused on the outside world representing power.

Jeff — I attempted to show how power tends to be in conservative hands and oppresses the free will. I could feel my advantage over the daughter when her father sided with me the kind and understood the daughter's helplessness. Other groups used other feelings and emotions with the same lines to come up with totally different scenes. I can now see how different lines and scenes can be interpreted.

"Midsummer Night's Dream" was the last role drama that was done this year and usually the end of the year brings with it a less focused, concentrated, and serious class. In fact, however, classes held together remarkably well. Although students entered my class loud, restless, and boisterous, something changed as they became absorbed in the drama. I was amazed that once the activity had begun the tone of the class changed; group work was quiet and focused. Students were involved and enjoyed what they were participating in. It was important to have different students working together in groups so that friends were not together all the time. I had learned that allowing one less-focused stu-

dent into each group was a wonderful control device. The tone of the class induced all students to a serious level of participation.

During one drama ten class the students were particularly restless and they wanted to do theatre sports. I decided to compromise and allow them to spend the first half on theatre sports, and the last half finishing our role drama. The theatre sports activity turned out badly. Few students wanted to participate and last year's stars wanted to shine the entire time. The class asked me to stop the activity as it was "stupid" and get back to the role drama. Once we had started the drama, the tone of the class changed dramatically. I could not believe this was the same class. I knew I was on the right track and that the journey I had started with my class back in September was proving more and more to be a success.

The final lesson was a wedding ceremony in which the three couples from the play were to be married. The students had to create the space and walk through the ceremony while I read the appropriate text. The ritual created was transforming. Each group presented their ritual separately and then the entire class walked through the ceremony at the same time. Something happened for everyone during this ceremony: we had all entered a new level and I felt excitement and anticipation about how far we could all go next year.

All my students had participated well in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The majority of students had believed, been committed to, and learned from the experience. The small group of negative students went along with it and even en-

joyed it, but they were not going to give it a real chance. Since September, the leader of this group had determined the approach was “stupid” and all journal entries as well as final assessment continued along this vein. His voice, and the echo in his group were the most negative I had heard all year. Most other students, however, even the skeptical, were now in favour.

CHAPTER 5: Summary And Conclusions

This study is comprised of reflections on a year's journey exploring the nature of drama education and how it works in the classroom. Reflections of the year have included both the students' journal entries as well as my own. My conclusions are therefore based on both. The process has involved implementing a new secondary drama/acting program that adheres to the curriculum requirements. It has also involved looking at how drama education can be used as a vehicle for learning personal, universal and analogous knowledge across the curriculum.

Journal entries, casual and formal interviews, discussions, self-assessment forms, and student summaries of the year were used for data. The result indicated that educational drama can be a successful approach to teaching drama ten and acting eleven/twelve.

Students were able to complete curriculum requirements in the subject area, as well as acquire further knowledge in areas not confined to theatre forum. I found that the tone and atmosphere of the class radically changed over the year. Class tone was serious and students became more conscientious. Students were able to learn more in this atmosphere and yet still maintain an enjoyment in the dramatic process.

I experienced the need for a new repertoire of skills. The demands on the teacher are greater in this approach. Planning is essential, especially long term planning. At the same time, however, teachers must be able to think on their feet and be open and flexible to meet the needs of the moment.

I found it necessary to constantly let go of old thinking styles in terms of goals and products, and to delight and reflect on the moment — a moment that could, like a crystal, shimmer in a multitude of ways depending on the light reflected on it.

Implications

Educational drama is an approach that can advance learning across the curriculum and integrate knowledge. Learning which includes the emotions and the intellect stimulates connections that help form new personalized knowledge and a real understanding rather than just the mere acquisition of facts. Accessing student understanding through the use of emotions enhances the learning experience. This research has shown the power of drama for students. It makes learning pleasurable and relevant.

The direction of education is moving toward holistic learning, the integration of subject areas and child-centred, personalized learning. The Year 2000: A Framework for Learning document exemplifies this movement. Drama in education can be an important vehicle for providing this kind of experience to the students. Future teacher training should include the ability to use educational drama in all subject areas.

Educational planning for the drama specialist with respect to this approach must be radically different than what is available today. Drama teachers should be fully cognizant of the art form, but should also have a broad base of knowledge and the ability to extract concerns from across the curriculum. The art form should be seen as a means of creating new understandings.

Instead of the prescriptive lesson plans with each step and objective carved in stone along the way, teachers must learn to trust themselves and react to situations as they occur in this journey of discovery. Sometimes teachers must direct, other times they must allow students to direct. At times, teachers must stop the action and magnify one moment while at other times they should increase the pace or move into other perspectives.

Teachers must learn to understand and use reflection in the drama class. This can be a difficult process. Teachers must learn to look at the ordinary and not so ordinary from new angles, magnify them and expose new understandings. They must always be accomplished at grasping the background knowledge and interest of the students.

Teachers must be trained to “perceive what is subtle, complex, and important” or “connoisseurship” as Eisner (1985, p219) refers to it. Teachers need to slow the pace of events and help students to “recognize and appreciate the qualities of the particular” (Eisner, 1985, p219), “become a student of human behaviour and to focus one’s perception” (Eisner, 1985, p220). One must go beyond looking to seeing the essences and significance of the particular.

This kind of teacher training must be an ongoing process. With each new level of understanding one finds new areas that need to be addressed or old ones that have to be reformulated. Learning is continuous. Educational drama means both the teacher and students are renewed by the stimulation of vital learning.

Recommendations For Further Study

This year long study focused on the implementation of educational drama. I feel that the next logical step in the research process would be to compare the effectiveness of educational drama with that of a skills based approach. This could be accomplished through the use of a longitudinal study which compares the two programs and their effectiveness in the following specific areas:

- communications
- social skills
- language development
- co-operation
- empathy
- ability to reflect and analyze objectively the world around students and their place in it
- aesthetic appreciation
- understanding, appreciation and use of the theatre art form

Research would also be helpful in developing a teacher training program for educational drama. Areas that could be focussed on include:

- the use of reflection as a teaching aid
- an understanding and use of theatre elements to evoke dramatic play experience
- the ability to be open and flexible to learning experiences

Concluding Remarks

The research project has proved to be a rewarding experience for both my students and me. Through this work I have come to realize the importance of the person inside the professional. I have come to trust myself and be more myself as a teacher.

My students experienced both the pleasure and the seriousness of drama. They have come to respect drama. The students have also been enriched by their involvement in an educational research project. Many felt pride in the fact that their opinions were important.

Student centred learning, cooperative learning, and the use of reflection in learning have proven to be powerful devices which should be further developed in the educational system.

I have enjoyed this year of discovery because of the richness of the experience it involved. I have particularly enjoyed reflecting on the journal entries of my students. Re-experiencing those moments made me realize they were precious and I felt an affection toward my students for their commitment and energy in experiencing and sharing those moments with me. I look forward to a new year when both my students and I have a greater understanding of this great apparatus — educational drama so that we can continue the journey.

Epilogue

It would be useful for the interested reader to locate the M.A Thesis of Laurie Jardine (1991). The work explores the issues discussed in this study as they relate to the junior secondary program.

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APPENDIX 1: Lesson Sequence For “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

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Part 3: Who Holds the Power?
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Part 7: Conclusion: Tying the Knot

Rationale

A sequence of lessons for moving into the text of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” for secondary students before any of them have read it.

The approach used in this series of lessons focuses on drama as a vehicle for learning. It requires no acting ability of the students, no formal theatre training and no need for excessive and unnecessary properties. It does, however, establish a sensitivity to the economical use of theatrical elements and an appreciation of the art form. Involvement in these experiences is personalized and committed.

It is helpful for the teacher to utilize the nuances of voice, a deep sense of pacing, intuitive “reading” of the class and, at all times, to maintain an empathy and interest in the experiences of the students.

Teachers must help their students to recognize that “acting” is not the intention, rather it is hoped that each individual will respond truthfully to each new development. Through this approach, students can begin to refine their understanding of theatrical elements, while deepening their understanding of the text.

We have attempted to illuminate certain concepts of the play in detail, particularly the notions of love, power and illusion.

Part One

Focus: to provide background information on Elizabethan times and a summary of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (known hereafter as M.N.D.)

Materials: tape recorder
taped selection of music with dreamlike quality (approximately 2 minutes)

1. Teacher asks students to sit in circle on the floor.
2. Teacher gives information on Elizabethan times as presented below. It is not necessary to provide more information than this at this time.

— “A.M.N.D.” was written in approximately 1595 by William Shakespeare

— New World recently discovered; exploration increasing

— illiteracy common, people still tended to believe strongly in traditions, local customs and superstitions

— Elizabeth I was queen, thus “Elizabethan” era

— the levels of power were clearly understood by all; both in government and family life

- fathers were the unquestioned heads of the household; daughters and wives had little power
- Midsummer Night occurred between dusk June 23 and dawn June 24, presenting an occasion for merrymaking, superstition, dancing and pageantry
- Midsummer Night was a time when Elizabethan audiences would willingly believe in the superstition that the heat of summer left men's minds open to madness

prepare to play taped music

3. Teacher: "Everyone now find a comfortable sleeping position on the floor, eyes closed, arranged in a circle. I'm going to turn the lights out and tell you a story."

Play tape (ask students to imagine they are lying in a forest)

4. Teacher: (read as written)*

"This is a story about several groups of people whose lives become entangled one evening in midsummer. Four young lovers escape into the forest where they become the entertainment of the King of Fairies, Oberon, and his mischievous assistant, Puck. The lovers have come to the forest to be free from the eyes of their parents, and are unaware of the eyes that watch them now. The fairy King and his Queen are quarreling and the enchanted forest becomes their battle-

ground. At the same time, the forest has become the rehearsal space for a group of uncouth tradesmen who intend to produce a play to celebrate the upcoming marriage of the King of Athens, Theseus.”

* as this is not teacher in role, it is suggested that the text be followed as its economical framework avoids confusion.

Part Two

Focus: to clearly establish the setting of the play

Materials: 2 large sheets of paper for each group of 6
2-3 assorted felt pens per group

A. BRAINSTORM

1. Teacher: “Please get into groups of 6. Quickly create a list on the first sheet of paper of all the things that come to your minds about forests.

Include: feelings

objects

ideas

things that could happen to you

You have 1 minute.”

**** If you feel the class needs slightly longer extend time**

**Group Management: Assign a recorder
reporter
BEFORE starting**

2. Teacher: Now, your group spokesperson will share what you feel are the most significant items on your list.

* caution students not to repeat what has been said, and that the last group might therefore have quite a short list.

Class shares lists

* Teacher should try to extract the most important items from the list, including such things as hiding, spells, potions, magic, being watched, fairies, etc.

B. MAP/PICTURE

This series explores the visual representation of the forest.

1. Teacher: "We're going to use some of these ideas in a minute, but first, let's talk briefly about the notions of love, power and illusion and the symbols that we recognize to represent them."

Discussion of symbols

2. Teacher: "Now, with the ideas that you've heard, your group will create a map, or picture, on the 2nd sheet of paper that depicts an enchanted forest. Within it, the notions of love and illusion are to be represented, and outside the boundaries of the forest, power and authority are to be shown. Include somewhere in the forest the idea of watching and being watched."

* Allow sufficient time for this: gauge the energy of the class

Post all maps around room

3. Teacher: "Representatives will now share your map with the class, being sure to indicate where on the map we should see power, love and illusion."

Share maps

Discuss the use of symbols that occur

C. MAGIC POTION

1. Teacher: "Can you think of occasions when spells and potions are used and for what reasons someone might want to use them?"

General Discussion: elicit such ideas as fairy tales, mad scientists, love stories, revenge, control, to change the future

2. Teacher: "Both spells and a love potion appear in A.M.N.D.

In new groups of 6 now, write a spell of 3-4 lines which are intended to make someone fall in love. You are to prepare to cast the spell in the most effective way you can devise, over the rest of the class.

It is important for your group to decide on how the class should be positioned when they fall under the spell.

* don't rush this

3. Each group casts spell over others in turn.

Discussion

What are your thoughts and feelings about power after doing this exercise?

What do you notice about the use of language?

How did each of the groups use space?

D. TABLEAU:

Divide class into 2 groups

“Each group will create a still picture which represents the map. Some place in your picture you must suggest love, power, watching and illusion/fantasy.

Museum exercise

1. ask the 1st group to set up their picture
2. tell the rest of the class to find a friend to speak to as they observe the statue they are to WHISPER only to each other and share any and all the impressions they “read” in the still pic.
3. after a suitable length of observation, have the class share aloud what they think they have seen.
4. have the still picture relax to explain itself
5. repeat with other half

Discussion

1. Where in your life do you experience being influenced by power?
2. In what forms do we find illusion/fantasy in our lives?
3. What kinds of love are there?

* any of the above questions might extend into a journal writing assignment.

Part Three

Focus: a comparison of authority within families in modern and ancient times

Materials: chairs

A. MODERN SITUATION

1. Teacher: "get into groups of 3, please"

"arrange three chairs in a form that would indicate that two people are in conflict and one person is there to help solve the problem".

“the roles are a graduating student, the father of the student and the school counsellor”.

“the situation is that you, the student have decided to go to university after graduating, but your father wants you to take over his business. He has called this meeting with the school counsellor to try to convince you to change your mind. You are humiliated and embarrassed by your father’s outspoken behaviour. Go ahead with the meeting now”.

Discussion

What did you observe happening in this encounter?

(ask each role in turn starting with the student)

* hopefully the responses will include . . . power, authority, suppression, determination, resentment, helplessness, etc.

B. TEXT BASED

Materials: chairs

banners of the following posted around room randomly:

- a) King: "To you your father should be as a god" Theseus
- b) Father: "As she is mine I may dispose of her" Egeus
- c) Daughter: "I would my father looked but with my eyes" Hermia

1. Teacher: "Stay in your roles from the last exercise, but the counsellor becomes the King. Egeus, the father has arranged a marriage for his daughter which she strongly opposes. He wishes Theseus to make a decision.

"Show this meeting from beginning to end, but each person may only speak one line at an appropriate time. Decide as a group in what order and why".

Show all scenes

Discussion

What were some of the different choices groups made to make the ideas clear to the audience?

(placement of chairs, order of lines, entrances, exits, action — was it logical?)

* this provides an opportunity to discuss theatre elements

Part Four

The Lovers

Focus: to introduce the lovers

Materials: chairs (essential),
copy of text passage for each student

Activity Description: Interpretive Gesturing

Students are asked to interpret a short piece of text, utilizing only upper body. They are to remain seated throughout and are permitted to move only arms, hands, and upper trunk. They may rotate in chair. The face must remain expressionless.

This is not an opportunity to MIME, rather actions are representational and abstract. Avoid the use of cliché and convention.

* Teacher must demonstrate an interpretation of one or two lines

1. Teacher sets up four chairs first in straight line.
2. Call a volunteer up to represent each character as they are introduced. (this exercise is to make clear which gender matches each name).

“We know that Hermia (girl takes one of the seats) is in love with Lysander (boy takes seat next to Hermia).

We know that Demetrius (a boy takes seat on other side of Hermia) loves Hermia and has been given the right to claim her as his bride.

The last lover, but unloved, is Helena (takes remaining seat next to Demetrius), who is blindly devoted to Demetrius, who rejects her.

Lysander Hermia Demetrius Helena

Interpretive Gesturing Exercise

1. Teacher explains the exercise as above.
2. Teacher does demonstration of interpretation of first two or three lines.
3. Each student receives copy of the text and characters assigned.
4. Class is divided into groups of four preferably two boys, two girls.

5. Students interpret entire passage in their groups.

. . . And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their council sweet,
There Lysander and myself shall meet,
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow. Pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep work, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From Lover's food till tomorrow deep midnight.

Notes: Teacher will narrate story while groups do presentation of work.

Teacher reminds class to take time and not miss any of the action or meaning of passage.

Teacher reminds class why the lovers are going into the forest.

* allow plenty of time for this exercise.

SHARE ALL SCENES

How did each group clearly represent the relationship between the lovers?

* this is an opportunity to emphasize use of space and action

Part Five

The Players

Focus: to introduce the play within the play
the concept of dual roles
an understanding of the comic elements

Materials: A copy of the prologue for each student
list of the tradesmen and corresponding player

Introduction: Teacher introduces labourers

“Also in the forest is a group of men who are labourers. They are in the forest to rehearse secretly a play to offer their king Theseus and his bride Hippolyta on their wedding day. These are rough coarse tradesmen who are very anxious to please their king so they tend to overdo even the slightest action. They are perfect examples of what we would call “hams”.

Distribute copy of prologue and character list

Instructions: In groups of six, choose characters and as the prologue is being narrated create the action which goes with the text in the most exaggerated manner possible.

When you get to the end of the prologue, FREEZE, being sure to capture elements of exaggeration in the statues.

SHARE ALL SCENES

Discussion

Caricature

Comedy/Tragedy

Buffoonery...enjoyment of other's discomfort

Part Six

The Fairy Kingdom

Focus: to explore the ideas of power
jealousy
magic spells and potions

Materials: poster:

“The next thing she waking
Looks upon
She shall pursue with the soul
Of love.”

Introduction: The forest also holds a kingdom of fairies. The King, Oberon, and his Queen, Titania meet unexpectedly in the forest at a time when they are having a lover’s spat. The fairies love to create havoc for the purpose of entertaining themselves.

Instructions: In pairs, create the action of the meeting of Oberon and Titania which leads up to the text above being spoken by Oberon. The ideas of jealousy, power and a love potion must be used.

* allow sufficient time

SHARE ALL SCENES

Discussion

How does love affect behaviour?

Part Seven

TYING THE KNOT: CONCLUSION

Focus: To show the resolution of all the confusion

Materials: poster:

“So shall all the couples
three
Ever true in loving be.”

INTRODUCTION: “Eventually all the lovers were found in the forest by Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus and all were forgiven for their disobedience. The magic of the fairies was able to unite everyone satisfactorily and they all lived happily ever after.”

A WEDDING PORTRAIT

Teacher: a. Divide class into three equal groups.

- b. Each group is to create a wedding portrait of the three couples just married
- c. Groups must distinguish between the wedding party and the wedding guests. The wedding party consists of Theseus/Hippolyta, Hermia/Lysander, and Helena/Demetrius.

- d. Have class arrange the space to represent a palace reception area where each group must enter into the hall through an established entrance way.
- e. Each group will enter the hall and set up their portrait for the rest of the class to see.

The final step in the sequence is to have all groups create their tableaux simultaneously while the teacher speaks the following passage:

“If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended:
That you have but slumb’red here,
While these visions did appear.”

This is the end of the sequence. Teachers may now move into a further exploration of the text, using more traditional methods as needed.

APPENDIX 2: Student Questionnaire

Please try to make your responses to these questions as full as possible and give examples wherever you can. I appreciate your effort on this assignment.

1. In what ways do you feel drama has changed from last year?
2. Are you aware of any changes that have occurred, generally, in student attitudes toward:

the subject:

the teacher:

each other:

3. Can you describe your expectations of drama class this year? Do they differ from last year? If so, how?

4. Has drama affected you in a personally significant way this year? If so, how?

5. Has participating in role dramas changed your perception of what drama can be?

6. Was there anything unexpected that you felt, experienced or learned in drama this year?
7. What excited you about drama this year?
8. What weaknesses did you perceive in drama class this year?
9. If you had to teach a drama class, what elements would you consider most important to convey to your students?
10. In what ways can drama enhance learning in other subject areas?
11. What have you observed about the way students use language during role dramas?
12. Do you feel that drama has enabled you to express yourself more clearly?
13. Has drama provided tools to help you open up your creativity?
14. Has participating in role dramas changed your understanding of other people and their situations?
15. Have there been moments in drama that you feel have been very special? If so, please give examples.

16. What areas of drama have you found difficult to understand or actively participate in?
17. When you think of drama as a method of presenting thoughts or ideas, what have you learned that would help you to express the ideas clearly? In other words, what theatrical elements are important to consider to help you communicate ideas to an audience?
18. Do you think that drama is for everybody, not just the students who are extroverted? If so, why?
19. Are you able to truthfully take on a role, put yourself in someone else's shoes, without being self-conscious?
20. What would you say to someone who has not yet had a course in drama?

APPENDIX 3: Student Self-Assessment

NAME: _____

1. How would you assess your effort?
2. What did learn about cooperation?
3. What activity did you find most rewarding and why?
4. What activity made you think of an experience you have had in your own life?
Explain.
5. How did your communication skills improve? Give examples.
6. What knowledge or truth did you learn from “The Crucible” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”?
7. Give examples of theatre elements used.

8. What grade would you give yourself this term including effort, attitude, cooperation, participation and learning?

Circle Grade

A B C+ C C- D E

Effort

G S U