

Exploring a Fairy Tale Through Drama: The Three Little Pigs

- A story drama lesson created by Eva Göksel

What is Drama in Education (DiE)?

“The difference between theatre and classroom drama is that in theatre everything is contrived so that the audience gets the kicks. In the classroom, the participants get the kicks. However, the tools are the same: the elements of theatre craft.”

- Dorothy Heathcote in Wagner, 1979, p. 147

Drama in Education (DiE) is an umbrella term for various teaching techniques that use elements of theatre such as games and acting exercises, in order to engage learners holistically in educational settings. DiE taps into three channels: The affective (heart), the kinaesthetic (body), and the cognitive (mind). DiE comes from the Anglo-Saxon tradition and has a long history in the UK, for example, where it has been a part of the teaching curriculum since the 1950s.

While theatre education generally focuses on creating an aesthetic product (i.e. a play) for an external audience, DiE is *process-oriented*, using drama to solve subject specific tasks in educational settings, as a group and/or as an individual learner. Thus, DiE strives to harness and deepen collective knowledge. In a DiE lesson, it is therefore not the quality of the acting but the quality of the learning that matters.

- DiE uses elements of theatre craft to facilitate learning in any subject
- DiE focuses on the personal learning journey of the participants
- DiE allows teachers and students to focus on what is experienced during the drama work (exploring a character, a time, a place)
- The DiE approach appeals to different learning styles and provides a chance for greater learning autonomy.
- DiE is a tried and tested teaching method that is widely used in English-speaking countries, such as the UK, Canada, the USA, and Australia
- DiE involves the whole class and encourages everyone to draw on existing knowledge and past and shared experience to solve a task or advance a story

Working in Phases

Drama work is best divided into phases, beginning with a **warm-up**. This builds trust, team spirit, and cooperation within the group. Drama work can only take place once everybody feels safe in the space and understands the rules of play.

Neelands and Goode (2015) call the next phase the **«pre-text»**. It is the starting point for the drama work. It provides the context/reason for the make-believe situation. It leaves room for unexpected plot twists. A letter, a story, a song, a picture, a text message, an object – all these and more can be used as pre-texts.

Next comes the actual drama work, which usually involves the use of drama **«conventions»**. These include activities such as Still-Image, Thought-Tracking, Hot-Seating, Role-on-the-Wall and many more. For a comprehensive list, see Neelands and Goode (2015) “Structuring Drama Work”.

Finally, drama work should always end with a **cool-down**, such as shaking off a role or singing a song. Exiting the world of make-believe and clearly discarding the roles helps participants disconnect and distance themselves from who they were and what they experienced in the drama. Once this is accomplished the group can (and should!) reflect on what they learned and experienced.

Some General Tips

- Everyone plays with everybody
- Practice and demonstrate respect (teachers and students)
- Learn to “read the room” (what, who, what emotions, etc.), by making eye contact and through observation
- Start slowly: Get the group used to drama work by repeating games and exercises over a period of time before starting a longer lesson
- Use circle work as a disciplinary tool: Although drama work contains a certain element of chaos, there are clear rules – everyone is responsible for him/herself and for the others in the room. If the group cannot form a circle, then the group is not yet ready for drama work. In that case continue with shorter drama games and exercises.

The Three Little Pigs: A sample lesson for the English classroom

Lesson aims:

- To explore a fairy tale in detail: To make the characters and their actions and emotions come to life.
- To introduce learners to an element of North American culture through songs and story.
- To build and practice vocabulary. (Consider what needs to be pre-taught).

Warm-up:

- 1. Reading the room:** Learners walk around the room noticing things in the room (doors, windows, bags, colours, clothing, etc.). The teacher stops the group and asks them to close their eyes and to point to various objects. Eyes open to check (and laugh!). Repeat.
- 2. Stop & Go / Jump & Clap:** This prepares the group to follow directions and adhere to an agreed set of rules.
- 3. Working in a circle:** Practice making eye contact, changing places, walking across different imaginary surfaces (e.g. straw, wood, bricks). This allows the group to practice cooperation, respect, and teamwork, as well as experiencing their first mini “performances” as they cross the circle.
- 4. Voice work:** This allows the group to practice projecting their voices by “throwing” colours across the circle/room as imaginary balls.

Drama sequence:

-Museum visit to meet one of the animals in the story: Half the group waits outside while the other half creates an animal (as a group). Hold the freeze for 1-2 minutes while the “visitors” observe the exhibit and guess the animal. Switch groups and allow the second group to choose their own animal.

-Chant: 2 lines (A & B) facing each other – A = “wolf” and B = “pigs”.

A: “Little pig, little pig, let me come in”.

B: “Not by the hair of my chinny, chin, chin”.

A: “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down”.

-**Still Image:** Mother pig saying farewell to her 3 little pigs.

- Add **Thought-Tracking** (hand on shoulder – thoughts, feelings)

- Begin telling story (remind pigs of the danger of the big bad wolf)

-Teach the song “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf? – Certainly not me!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIOS0lqMaj8>

The 3 little pigs are unconcerned.

-Still-Image → short improvisation: 3 little pigs leave home together.

-Still-Images: 1st pig builds a house of straw (whole group creates house with a pig inside). 2nd pig builds house of wood (whole group creates house with 2nd pig inside). 3rd pig builds house of brick... with a chimney.

-Storytelling/Song: Night falls and the pigs sing in their houses (whole group sings). This attracts the big bad wolf.

-Teacher-in-Role: TiR as the big bad wolf. Knocks on the first pig's door (house of straw – whole group!).

Wolf: "Little pig, little pig, let me come in".

Pig: "Not by the hair of my chinny, chin, chin".

Wolf: "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down".

*The whole group can join in chanting with the pig and/or with the wolf.

-Storytelling/Moving Image: The wolf blows the house down! The 1st little pig runs to his brother/her sister in the house of wood. The wolf follows and the story repeats. The 2nd house is also blown down. The three little pigs hide in the house of bricks. Repeat chant.

-Storytelling/Song: The wolf is unable to blow the brick house down. The pigs sing their song. The wolf is furious and tries to go down the chimney. The pigs light a fire and the wolf goes right back up the chimney, runs away and is never seen again. The pigs sing their song in celebration and live happily ever after. THE END.

-Cool down: Pick one word from the story. Ball it up in your hands and on the count of three, and throw it up to the ceiling, shouting out the word.

-Shake off your role of pig or wolf.

The Disney cartoon can be found on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olo923T2HQ4>

Selected Literature:

Arnet-Clark, Illya et al. (2005). Young World 1. Zug: Klett & Balmer. Seite 32-33.

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