Exploring Castles: Authentic Teaching and Learning through Drama

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I've been asking lots of questions. Asking what might people have been doing, thinking and feeling because they were here [in the castle]. I wondered a lot too. I wondered what their lives were like and why people were here and what might have happened to them if they were outside... I used the things we found [artifacts and written materials] and tried to figure out what they meant, how they were used, that kind of stuff. I thought a lot about women and how they have been treated and how they could get things done for themselves throughout history. I got the chance to experiment with those questions and to do and feel the things those castle people did for myself. I don't know what historians do, but that's what I did during the drama.

—Jessica, grade 6

When Jessica said these words at the end of a week-long study of "Castles," I know that my eyes sparkled. I was glad that Jeff was keeping notes because I knew that I intended to repeat her words the next time I was asked by a teacher—or an administrator—what drama had to do with education. Drama had been the core of teaching and learning in our short study of European medieval society. Jessica had articulated that she had achieved our primary aim. As she imagined and worked with others, she had been thinking like an historian.
Jessica was one of ten sixth-grade students with whom I worked as an integral part of a week-long class for a dozen teachers at the University of Maine concerning the use of drama in the elementary and secondary classroom.

I was delighted that Jessica and the other students, none of whom had ever before used drama for learning, had so vividly demonstrated the power of classroom drama in the 1996 university summer institute which Jeff codirected. I remember on the first day having had to work hard to create conditions in which the students felt comfortable enough to talk, share, ask questions, or leave the security of their chairs. By the end of the week, however, they had collaboratively designed a museum, created interactive displays, danced, written a ballad, sung, and talked in depth about issues like fairness and representation.

The students’ dramatizations and interactions about castles and the people who might have lived in them had evoked the world of the Middle Ages; yet these images had been created in the barren atmosphere of a college classroom devoid of established friendship groups, school library, or extensive supplies. Students and teachers worked together throughout the week. The students’ enthusiasm and collaboration with each other and with the teachers, as well as the growth in their engagement over four days gave credence to the stories Jeff and I told the teachers about the previous year when Jeff had been a middle-level classroom teacher in Wisconsin and I had been a professor at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. We talked about the power of drama in the year when I had been a guest teacher in his literature-rich small-town classroom. For Jeff’s students, working cooperatively in integrated units of inquiry had become the norm; over that year drama had become integral to classroom learning and teaching. Working with the students in Maine showed the teachers how communities of inquiry could be established in their classrooms and the significance of drama for the process.

I did not need to lecture the Maine teachers about current educational issues and concerns with authentic pedagogical approaches—they were demonstrated in embryo that week. Curriculum integration, student-centered inquiry in a caring community, connections with the world outside the classroom, cooperative learning, group work, critical thinking, creativity, in-depth analysis of content, arts-based learning, accommodating different learning styles, exploring related ethical concerns, and other modes all occurred in contexts in which teachers stretched students’ thinking and assisted students to question ideas and to create rich, multilayered understandings. Drama enabled all of this and more.
We did not just study history—the students’ (and the teachers’) questions about the past were examined and explored in rich integrated contexts that connected the past with the present. Students read, wrote, did mathematical calculations, and planned science experiments as they thought about the history of a castle. They became deeply engaged and wanted to work together because their inquiries were rooted in their questions and because they felt safe and respected. They were not given watered down sources, but used adult references on castles. They did sit and write on occasion, but they were neither tied to a desk nor required to be silent; as appropriate, they moved and they talked. That week they also drew, sculpted, made models, danced, and sang. Deep social and ethical questions arose about medieval life—the role of women, the relative positions of rich and poor, the rights of the oppressed to rebel. In the exploration of these questions, by students and teachers together, multilayered historical, cultural, and social contexts were created that gave texture to the facts the students already knew and recently uncovered, as well as deepened the realizations and discoveries they made during our work.

This all became possible through the use of drama. Not the performance of plays or the acting out of stories, but the sort of drama in which students together imagine in order to learn. Students imagined that they were the sort of people who cared about castles—historians, archaeologists, preservationists—and for four days they saw the world through other eyes and wondered about the sorts of questions such professionals ask. As they wondered, they inquired, read, wrote, argued, thought, moved, and dramatized their ideas. As students wondered, teachers wondered with them and helped them to push their thinking and to delve into content and ideas in depth and breadth. We not only explored the physical towers and dungeons of castles in imagination; through imagination we also explored the medieval world as we studied, discovered, and created historical, cultural, social, and individual meanings associated with one particular castle.

Drama not only enabled all this, but also created a learning environment that during the week became increasingly multifaceted, supportive, and complex—a space where laughter intermingled with serious discussion, a place to which students and teachers wanted to return, and a site where imagination was harnessed in pursuit of work of quality and dignity that examined and explored issues of human concern.

WHAT IS “DRAMA”?

At its simplest, drama is wondering, “What if ...?” and then interacting with others in a “drama world” (Edmiston 1991; O’Neill 1995), as if that
imagined reality was actual. The dramatic play of three-year-old children and the theatrical performances of professional actors are created and experienced in similar aesthetic and dramatic spaces—in the realm of what the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky called “the magic if” (Wolf, Edmiston and Enciso, 1997).

Asking “What if...?” is not an optional question in the curriculum—imagining possibilities is at the core of understanding other people, other times, and other places. Imagination is an integrative force in the curriculum as students wonder: What if we were historians, kings, or serfs? What if we lived somewhere else, in the future, or in the past? What if we were older, more expert, or more powerful? What if we were younger, less experienced, or more vulnerable? When students connect their experiences with those of others, then their views of others and of themselves will be changed. Dorothy Heathcote, the renowned British educator and pioneer of the use of drama in the classroom, puts it like this: in drama you “put yourself in other people’s shoes and by using personal experience to help you to understand their point of view you may discover more than you knew when you started” (Heathcote et al. 1984).

Drama in the classroom is broadly of two types that parallel the drama of the theatre and the drama of children’s play: the performance of written texts and the scriptless kinds of drama in which the improvised process is the product. If students watch or perform plays, as they hear or speak the words of characters, they can consider situations from the characters’ different points of view. Similarly, students who imagine that they are other people see the world from other viewpoints as they interact as if they were others. In this book, we are mostly concerned with process kinds of drama. When we mention “drama,” unless specified otherwise, we are considering drama in which there is no external audience, no prepared script, and in which the teacher frequently takes on roles with students (Wolf, Edmiston and Enciso, 1997).

Drama harnesses students’ imagination to breathe life into the concepts and content of the curriculum. As Cecily O’Neill puts it, drama “generates and embodies significant meanings and raises significant questions” (O’Neill 1995, 153). Students imagine the viewpoints of people who care about real-life concepts and content—people whose lives and concerns are too easily forgotten when teachers cover areas of the curriculum. Facts and information become relevant when they are relevant to the lives of the people the students imagine. Further, students encounter facts and concepts in context and create meaning as they interact in situations. Students are self-motivated when they imagine together in drama—when they see through others’ eyes they see the curriculum from inside out. The ques-
tions that arise provide students with their own entry points into further study and indicate to teachers those directions to pursue with the class with or without the use of drama.

Teachers can focus their work through drama on any aspect of the curriculum. When students are engaged in drama, teachers and students learn about complex concepts and substantive content as they imagine themselves people concerned with relevant issues and problems. Further, since students’ understandings and questions are made visible in the talk and movement of drama interactions, teachers can assess and later address students’ misconceptions or confusions.

Attitudes that tend to dismiss other times, other people, or unfamiliar ideas and difficult concepts as “boring” or “irrelevant” are challenged by the students themselves in drama as they begin to imagine other viewpoints and situations in which the significance of abstract concepts like “justice,” “truth,” or “history” can come to life in the actions, concerns, and interactions of specific people in particular moments of their lives. When you have imagined a castle and yourself as a “just” king or as a minstrel telling the “truth,” then your views of the “history” of medieval society are personalized and rescued from dehumanizing abstractions. Because drama experiences occur in fictional worlds when students imagine they are elsewhere, their feelings (which may never be shared) and their movements (which may only be seen as a tilt of the head) connect with and amplify their thoughts of other people, times, and places. Drama worlds are suffused with empathy because they “exist in the hearts, heads, voices, and hands of children and their teachers.” As scholars from Dewey to Vygotsky have argued, “Rather than separate intellect from affect, drama, like life, weaves the two together—integrating mind and emotion within the experience and action of specific situations” (Wolf, Edmiston and Enciso, 1997).

Drama needs more than individual imagination; drama worlds are created and experienced in interaction. With or without the teacher, students may interact in whole group, small groups, or in pairs. Using drama in the classroom opens up the possibility of cooperative intense processes of discovery, creation, and learning. Together, the group collaboratively explores events, ideas, and themes through physical, intellectual, and emotional engagement with experiences, roles, and situations brought to life through their collective imagination.

Teacher-student interaction is crucial in drama. Although drama work follows students’ interests and suggestions, the teacher is responsible for sequencing tasks and shaping the drama. Even though students will often work in small groups, it is in the teachers’ interactions with students where ideas are most likely to be clarified, shaped, extended, and revised.
Students are not only in "role" in drama, they are "framed" (1) as people who are responsible for other people and who have a need to relate to particular content areas and ideas. If they become engaged in the drama world, their position facilitates development of a growing sense of responsibility and of significance. As trustees and curators of a proposed museum, our students in Maine were charged with a responsibility both to design a museum that would be historically accurate and appropriately engaging for future visitors.

In drama, students not only adopt positions—they encounter situations and points of view—represented by other students, texts, and by the teacher—that challenge and change them and their views of whatever they are studying. Heathcote (BBC 1971) has described drama succinctly as "a real man in a mess." The "mess" is an experience of a problem, difficulty, or dilemma. In the study of castles, students dealt with problems like designing a museum, difficulties like deciding how to explain European medieval life to contemporary Americans listening to NPR, and dilemmas like how to represent a legend accurately when so many versions of the "truth" existed.

In dealing with a "mess," students' views change because "drama is human beings confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges" (Heathcote 1984, 44). What they are faced with are alternative points of view from which to make meaning, see significance, and from which to make ethical decisions.

Students' understandings are changed and become more complex as they reflect on their shifting viewpoints (Edmiston 1991a). The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin argues that we only form new understandings when our viewpoint is "doubled" and we experience two or more views at the same time (Bakhtin 1981, 1986). Without shifts in our positions we are left to do no more than repeat the ideas of others. A doubling of viewpoints occurs more easily in art than in life; it happens repeatedly in drama as a kind of "double consciousness"—an experience of two spaces and two perspectives at once. At the same time as participants experience the actual classroom interactions among teacher and students, they also experience and interact as if they are elsewhere. In this drama space, their understandings change if they begin to relate: what is to what might be, the here and now to the there and then, and the self to the other (2).

Meg was one of the students whose understandings changed. At the end of our four days together, she concluded that "We never really know, we just think based on the little things we do know." She continued: "We have different answers because people believe differently. Museums usually only have one point of view but we have many because anything could have
happened and there would be different views because there were lots of different people involved who were treated different... nothing’s too clear cut, that’s what I learned, all of these [conflicting viewpoints] might have been correct in different ways.”

THE CASTLE DRAMA

My main purpose in working with the students in Maine was to show teachers how drama could create an integrated curriculum and transform study of a specific curricular area, like history, from an obsession with dates and facts to a commitment to inquiry. In addition, I wanted to demonstrate facets of the constructed, situated, connected, and ethical dimensions of learning.

The unit also had specific aims related to historical concepts. Through drama, the students explored the relevance of history and core historical concepts and preoccupations, including the following: historical questions are asked by contemporary professionals; the past may only be accessed from incomplete clues in the present that can be interpreted in different ways; past stories get retold and combined by different tellers and writers to make different “histories”; stories are told from different points of view; not all stories get retold; stories change over time. Most of all, I wanted the teachers to see that through drama the students could begin to think like historians and recognize the need for a historical viewpoint.

The students had free rein in choosing the particular historical topic. For about fifteen minutes on the first day, the students generated a list of possibilities that were narrowed down to two choices: “the Titanic” and “Castles.” After a debate about why they wanted to study each, they reached a consensus on Castles.

On the next day as the students entered, they encountered drawings and diagrams of castles, medieval artifacts, and people of the Middle Ages. David Macaulay’s Castle and National Geographic articles were the main sources. I asked the students to walk around, look closely at the images that we had placed on the floor and consider what interested them in the pictures. After a brief sharing, I asked them to choose one image and suggested: “If you were somebody who was interested in the history of this castle, what would you wonder about?” Students then worked in pairs, traded their pictures, and for about ten minutes shared their wonderings.

Students asked these questions and many more: How did the builders choose where to build the castle? How many stones were used to build the castle? How did they lift the stones? What machines did they have? What did they use for a water supply? How did they know the wells were safe?
Was it healthy to live in the castle? How long could inhabitants survive a siege? Who lived here and why? What about bathrooms? Why did the king live in the top story? How did the king become king? What could the people do if they didn’t like the king? Why was the castle built? Why did the people serve the king? Who were the enemies of the castle? How long did the castle take to build? What was it made of? Did they have cement? Could it burn down? Why were the windows and towers built the way they were? What weapons did they use? What caused the castle to fall into ruins? What did the people eat? Is the word “villein” related to “villain”? “Cotters” to “cottages”? Were there schools? What could you do to improve your social standing? What legends and stories are there about this castle?

These were authentic questions—all were generated by the students and arose from what interested them. They had also begun to see through the eyes of “those who were interested in the history of the castle.” Each question provided rich, problem-oriented, student-centered, integrated, and inquiry-driven curricular possibilities. The questions cut across subject areas such as science, math, health, history, and language arts. These historically situated questions also had connections to current social issues (from water supplies to work) and social problems (from weapons to leadership). Jim Beane (1994, 126) reminds us that curriculum materials should be generated from student interests, should be presented as “problematic” and not “authoritative,” should provide possibilities for mastering important learning processes and significant content, and should connect to the social concerns of the world. Our drama work, as will be seen, allowed us to address all of these concerns.

Many of the students’ questions and interactions were in the present tense, which suggested that they were beginning to imagine a fictional castle. Soon they were able to transition to interacting in a shared drama world. Once they had established that the castle was in England and they agreed with my suggestion that it would be interesting for them to think about turning it into a museum, I asked them to agree to take on an “expert” role.

I used the mantle of the expert drama approach and asked the students if they could imagine that they were people who worked for the [British] National Trust—they agreed (3). In mantle of the expert drama, students are cast in functional roles as knowledgeable and skillful experts whose help and advice has been requested by a client. Students initially make various joint policy decisions and engage in a series of mostly small-group short-term tasks. Even though we only worked for about eight hours over four days and students had only limited opportunities to pursue their inquiries, the mantle of the expert approach can sustain involved work over several weeks or even months.
The situation that I invented and offered as a beginning point was that the Trust had just received a gift of castle ruins on the Cornish coast. Our job: to decide when and how best to make the ruin into a museum. We reminded students that we would certainly want to address the questions they had previously generated as we pursued our drama work.

After their initial agreement I asked what professionals might work for the Trust. They gave a variety of responses including archaeologists, museum curators, trustees, and historians. Then I put them into pairs as a trustee and an archaeologist. They imagined that they “toured” the grounds of the castle during an archaeological dig looking carefully for remains of medieval artifacts. The artifacts they “found” and then shared were based on the drawings and photographs that they had just been studying so intently. Later, while the trustees slept (students lay or sat on the floor), the students who had been in role as archaeologists were free to roam the room as figures in the trustees’ “dreams” of the artifacts—their whisperings and movements suggested daily doings and historical events that had occurred within the castle walls. The students began to weave historical contexts for the objects—swords had been used to kill and defend, jewelry had been worn by royalty but also by poor peasants when it had been stolen. They left for home talking about their work and, unprompted, many began their own independent research.

Most of the students arrived for the next day of our work with the fruits of their self-initiated research. One girl brought a sword she had made, a boy carried a Lego castle model, and several students brought stories and pictures of castles. All were eager to share their findings—some became a focus for that day’s dramatic episodes.

As the trustees met to “debate” the purpose of the site and how to make it interesting to the public, Pat proposed creating a theme park. Kelsey and others were opposed; they suggested a living history museum and after discussion everyone agreed that this would be more appropriate. The group considered how to make the site interesting and unique. Pat argued that “it should be for kids, and for students, but have something for parents too—so people will come for school trips and on vacations.” An “advertising” campaign was discussed, as was how this site would be different from other castle sites in England. The talk continued on to the ethical issues and responsibilities of a museum. When I asked, “Must our museum be true to history?” Jessica answered “Yes, but we don’t know much so we’ll have to try to find out more and then be true to what we know. But we’ll be able to make up other things that fit with what we know, things like real people’s names and games they played and things like that.” This provoked further discussion about truth and history and how we come to know and be sure
of things. A policy decision was made about what kind of information should be presented in the museum—it had to fit what we knew of the castle and the era but it would not be limited to actual artifacts.

The students were fascinated by the sword that Meg had made and brought in. I suggested that as the museum curators, we should discuss the creation of an “exhibit” surrounding the sword that had been discovered and of which a replica had been made. To help the students imagine a historical sword and context, I held Meg’s sword reverentially and walked past the students who looked at it and each added one imaginary detail about the original ancient sword: it was heavy... gashed... jeweled... had a faint inscription... the inscription was in a different language... it began “Only she...”; there were notches on the hilt... the handle was encrusted with gold... a woman’s hair was braided onto the handle.

The students were intrigued by the possible implications of this inscribed sword. As the trustees, they discussed what they could find out from these details of the sword. Were the words in Cornish, French, or some other language? What would this tell us about the age and original owner of the sword? What about the gold and the notches—what did these details reveal? What did the inscription and the woman’s hair mean? Could this sword have been dedicated to a knight’s lady? Could it have possibly been owned by a woman? The words on the blade could be Anglo-Saxon, French, or Cornish—each would suggest a different historical era. If the castle had been King Arthur’s, what language would be on the sword? Gender issues, stimulated by the detail about the woman’s hair, led to a consideration of the feudal system and the roles of women in the Middle Ages and today. Students volunteered to go that night to the library to research possible answers, which were shared the next day.

Richie’s model castle provided the focus for the next episode when the students suggested life-size historically accurate models of castle rooms in a visitor’s center. They looked at the Lego model as well as the pictures of castles and then placed themselves throughout the room as if they were in different parts of a full-size model. As they described what could be added, Molly thought the exhibit needed to be interactive; Richie wanted it to be multimedia with sounds, music, dialogue, a slide show and real people playing the parts of feudal characters. The students immediately agreed. They also decided that sharing the stories of the people were just as important as the facts though the difference should be made quite clear to visitors.

Jeff now held the sword and walked around as the students improvised a draft of an evocative tape, which visitors would hear. A choral montage ensued that went as follows: Yes, sire... I’m hungry... a copper or two for

We asked the students and teachers to face away from each other (to aid concentration) and imagine that they were the historical people who had said the words they had voiced in our choral poem. We suggested that they revise or expand what they had said, to give it greater mood and dynamics—to make the tape more engaging for visitors. Jeff and I both modeled how to do so with our own lines. This time, the students became more animated and situated in the medieval world as they acted out and voiced their lines.

Kelsey expanded her “Drat my stew!” to “Drat, you dirty serf! You have wasted our precious salt, and that stew is now too salty for the king!” Maryann went from “Stitch up my boots!” to “Tailor! Can you not sew my tunic from your memory? Am I so much changed?” Throughout, the students attempted to take on the actions, demeanor, and language of the roles they played. When we had completed the montage, they broke into spontaneous applause. As we stepped back from the drama, the students commented on how well the montage brought to life what they had read about medieval castle life.

Through the remainder of the drama work the students designed other exhibits, read historical accounts, created more artifacts, were interviewed for public radio and television, planned a marketing campaign, read various accounts and legends of King Arthur, and created a legend about this castle. The students wanted to consult a real architect and a home restorer about the problems of restoration. One group of girls became interested with the notion of women warriors and read about Joan of Arc, Hippolyte and the Amazons, and an article about women in today's army. Tableaux or frozen pictures of medieval scenes were created physically and provided with captions. This led to drawings of wall hangings of events from the crusades to be used in one of the exhibit halls.

On the last day, the students created and enacted the events of a local legend about the visit and assassination of the king. This legend explained the demise of the castle. One student was familiar with Shakespeare's Macbeth and noted the connection. As possible museum exhibits, they created tableaux, which then came to life. These showed different possible ways in which the legend of the assassination might have happened.
The unit culminated with students writing verse in small groups. I suggested that the students retell part of the legend as it might have been told years later by minstrels at different courts. The students soon realized that different versions would develop. Then I asked how the legend might have changed over time and asked them to retell moments from the story again as if they were the grandchildren of the different minstrels. Again, change of content and shifting point of view became obvious. Finally, I asked if they would like to write what the minstrels might have sung and in groups they wrote verse to the melody of "Greensleeves," which they chose as appropriate. Each verse told the legend of the castle's fall but from a different point of view: the queen, her sister, her lady-in-waiting, the king's brother, the assassin, and the king's falcon, which had witnessed his death. After twenty minutes work, the students performed the song as if in the final exhibit for visitors touring the museum. Jeff's wife, Peggy, came to class that final day and delighted students and teachers by playing the lute and harp on her clavinova. The students sang to this evocative music as they played the parts of "minstrels" and "skops" telling tales of the castle a hundred years after it had fallen into ruins.

In this brief summary of the drama episodes used in this inquiry unit, we can see students' authentic engagement: asking questions and posing problems; seeking and finding information; reading and studying; considering, creating; and interpreting artifacts; wanting to interview community authorities; arguing, taking notes, telling stories, creating poems and songs; playing roles, discussing, and debating, connecting past and present, considering issues; analyzing and organizing information; representing and presenting what has been learned to others; considering and discussing ethical issues and much more.

We can also see Jeff and me as teachers authentically engaging with students and responding to their current questions and emerging understandings during the flow of carefully situated and purposeful learning. We attempted in various ways to continually raise the level of student learning: through our questions, our modeling, our cognitive and affective structuring of dramatic situations, our negotiations about dramatic action, and through reflection and feedback both within and outside the drama world. As teachers, we worked hard to build and frame dramatic situations and to guide students to perform their developing understandings through the use of different drama methodologies (mantle of the expert, scripted performance), various strategies (teacher in role, interviews, radio shows, rituals, narrative, choral montage, dramatic play, frozen pictures), and teaching techniques (questioning, pair work, small group work).
DRAMA'S ROLE IN AUTHENTIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the 1920s, John Dewey stressed that knowledge is the *means* rather than the end product of education yet, like many teachers, for years I assumed that education was individual "instruction" believing that students were learning if I gave them information or directed them to resources (Dewey 1922, 223). I had failed to cultivate what Heathcote calls "authenticity" in my classroom (4). As I watched the students in Maine become excited about life in a castle, memories flooded back about when I was a secondary school teacher of similar students in England years earlier. Although my students had read about feasts and jousts, and had themselves scrambled over actual castle ruins, after weeks of study they still seemed detached from the lives of medieval people. I had assigned work and graded it but I had done little of what I would now call teaching. I had not created contexts with students in which they could imagine the worlds of the books and explore their relationships with the societies, past, present, and future, which we talked about in class. I had done little either to assist students in the performance of their knowledge or to ensure that they would encounter alternative viewpoints that would challenge their thinking and provoke their creation of new understandings. Most significantly, I had regarded the interrelationships among students, subject matter, the world, and the teacher, as peripheral rather than central to learning—both theirs and mine.

Rethinking teaching, and learning to use drama for these new purposes, for me occurred gradually but simultaneously. The practices and philosophies of two renowned master teachers and theorists—Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neill—were seminal. Heathcote, with whom I studied for a year, uses the word "enabling" to capture the multifaceted stance of the authentic teacher who uses drama (Heathcote 1982, 1984). An enabling teacher works alongside students but is careful to choose when, and when not, to intervene so that at different moments she will allow, guide, shape, or challenge responses as students create and explore contexts and meanings together. Cecily O'Neill, who advised me during work on my doctoral dissertation, has stressed that drama, whether scripted or improvised, is "a place of disclosure . . . a way of seeing ourselves more clearly and allowing us to begin to correct whatever is amiss" (O'Neill 1995, 152). In working with her, I have recognized that the moves a teacher makes in drama are the selections and shapings of a dramatic artist; I have learned how to use theatrical structures that are available to the teacher in the improvised creation of powerful dramatic classroom experiences (O'Neill 1995). This book explores both the pedagogical and the
artistic moves of Jeff and me as enabling teachers who strive for authenticity in the classroom.

For the past fourteen years, in my own elementary classroom and in all classrooms where I continue to teach as a guest, I have striven for authentic teaching and learning—in which connections are made among the lives of students and the histories, viewpoints, and cultures of people and places separated from the classroom by time or space.

As a teacher, I want to establish a laboratory atmosphere in which processes are learned as products are created, in which students’ interests are harnessed and extended, and in which the knowledge and viewpoints of texts and people are explored and juxtaposed to foster growth of students’ understandings. From the first time I visited Jeff’s classroom, it was clear that authentic teaching and learning had become as important for him as they had for me. Later chapters in this book mostly revolve around examples from Jeff’s classroom as we explore how drama can create the conditions for authenticity as it moves to the core of classroom teaching and learning. In this chapter I use the study and exploration of castles with the students in Maine to illustrate the integrative power of drama even when students are not in a supportive classroom context.

My problem—confusing instruction with education—was not unique. Tharp and Gallimore in their award-winning book Rousing Minds to Life (1988, 3–4) state it in the strongest possible terms: “In American classrooms, now and throughout the 20th century, teachers generally act as if students are supposed to learn on their own. Teachers are not taught to teach, and most often do not teach. . . . All participants in the educational enterprise have shared an inadequate vision of schooling.”

A remarkable consistency is emerging from various fields and educational policy camps about new criteria to assess the authenticity of classroom life. Many scholars and practitioners have come to embrace views of teaching which emphasize the context of learning; the relationships among teacher, students, and the world outside the classroom; as well as the significance of classroom interactions. Calls for “inquiry-based” education, “cooperative groupings,” “caring communities,” “holistic assessment,” “integrated curricula,” “learning as design,” and “situated learning” are all examples of a shift from content-oriented and “drill-and-skill” views of education to more authentic meaning constructive approaches to classroom-based teaching and learning. The curriculum can no longer be regarded as a prepackaged thing which is delivered to students; curriculum is meanings which are cocreated by teachers and students in their day-to-day lives in the classroom. In drama, meanings about matters of significance
are continually created as teachers and students imagine, interact, reflect, and inquire together in situated, integrated contexts.

**Context of Learning**

John Lounsbury pointedly argues that traditional education, despite a clear diagnosis, is ailing terribly: fragmented curricula, limited involvement and engagement of kids in planning and pursuing learning, the decontextualization of skills and concepts, the separation of school from the world, the imposition of higher standards without accompanying assistance in meeting those standards, ability grouping, the separation of educational programs (Lounsbury 1996). The real tragedy in this situation, as Lounsbury insists, is that there is widespread agreement regarding a solution, a solution that involves proven alternatives. Lounsbury’s argument is echoed by that of James Beane in his influential *From Rhetoric to Reality*, by the brand new *Breaking Ranks* by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and by progressive educators and educational researchers throughout the twentieth century (Beane 1993, Dewey 1938).

Researchers, theorists, and policy makers argue that the context of the classroom must create authentic *curriculum integration*. Both Lounsbury and Beane tell us separately that we must break down the artificial barriers of subject areas. Cognitive science also insists that language development, reading, writing, concept attainment and thinking in all knowledge domains “are profoundly inter-connected, and so must be their instructional programs. . . . it is on that interface that the highest order of meaning is achieved, ensuring that tools of thought can be manipulated for the solution of practical problems in the experienced world.” (Tharp and Gallimore 1993, 108). Further, the curriculum must become centered on problems and predicated on issues that are personally significant to students which will lead to greater concept acquisition, systematicity, applicability and extensibility of knowledge. Does this not sound like what happens in drama?

Within the Castle drama context, students asked their own questions, drove their learning onward, and proceeded easily to integrate knowledge from various domains to explore and search for solutions to the problems they had identified. For example, they combined using math to calculate the castle size to the science inherent in understanding moving granite blocks into place, to the historical and ethical issue of whether the castle should be reconstructed using only the tools and machines available in the Middle Ages. Further, in the context of the drama, Jeff
and I frequently found ourselves touching on domains that crossed the boundaries of science, math, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines.

Relationships Among Teachers, Students, and the World Outside Classrooms

Although the sixth graders in Maine constructed a rich system of conceptual knowledge about medieval castle life, their understandings were formed in a community of peers and teachers who collectively shared and shaped their views and insights. Over a complete year in his classroom, Jeff skillfully wove with his students what Nel Noddings calls a “caring community”—a space of deep trust where students felt safe in their explorations and analysis of relationships, roles, content, and their connections with the “real” world (Noddings 1992). However, after only a few hours in Maine, students’ laughter, their readiness to cooperate, and especially their genuine but respectful disagreements signaled that such a community was beginning to develop.

An integrated curriculum focuses on the teaching and learning of transferable processes, strategies and skills—on knowing how much more than knowing about (what cognitive scientists call procedural rather than declarative knowledge). Such learning is inextricably part of relating classroom processes to the issues and concerns of the world outside the classroom. Factual knowledge wilts if not used; knowing how leads to further learning, and is integral to creating and finding meaning in life. John Dewey wrote that “the great waste of school is the child’s inability to use what he knows in school; and to apply what he learns in school in his real life.” (Dewey 1910).

Scholars have extended Dewey’s insight to argue that students’ understandings remain superficial unless their learning is grounded in rich, complex, multidisciplinary, “real world” contexts. In place of the prevalent decontextualized information-transmission mode of learning, education should become “situated” in authentic “communities of practice,” which resemble professional or trade apprenticeships (Lave and Wenger, 1991). If students read, write, and think about content in ways similar to those experts whose jobs require them to read, write, and think, then students will similarly learn in much more complex and meaningful ways about, for example, critical reading, report writing—or history. Journalists, book editors, and archaeologists are among the professionals who initially learn key skills and processes as “apprentices.” They learn in context and in relationship to content; they also learn by context-bound interactions and by indi-
rect observation of more experienced teachers and peers as much as they learn by direct instruction.

Eliot Wigginton's *Foxfire* books demonstrated how students learn about themselves and about humanity when the stories and lives of local people outside the school building come inside the classroom to become the heart and soul of education. In a similar way, through collective imagination, teachers and students in drama connect with other times and places—real world issues from the past and from a distance come under the classroom microscope as they are recreated, experienced, savored, reinterpreted, and critiqued.

Drama in general, and the mantle of the expert approach in particular, situates learning in the professional relationships inherent in communities of expert practice. For example, in the Castle drama, it was the professional concern with history on the parts of the archaeologists and trustees of the National Trust that provided a context, and thus a reason and purpose, for the students' reading, writing, interactions, research, and evolving understandings.

**Classroom Interactions**

Over the years, as I recognized how experiences with drama intensified students' engagement in their exploration of themes and questions of personal interest, I also realized the unavoidably interactive nature of teaching and learning that makes the processes of education much more than either instruction or facilitation taken separately. As I discovered how effectively different views could be expressed, explored, and challenged in juxtaposition through drama, I began to recognize how teachers enable students to explore and extend their world views.

It also became clear to me from my classroom experiences that neither learning nor teaching are individual affairs. Learning is a product of social interactions; teaching is informed benevolent intervention that enables students to go beyond where they would on their own. Adult mediation is at the core of good teaching—a more competent adult who both participates and observes so that he or she can know when assistance is requested or may be needed by individuals and groups.

Few teachers confuse behavior with changes in meaning and most accept (often implicitly) Piaget's core concept that students must be given opportunities to construct their own understandings. For example, most elementary school teachers encourage experimentation with objects; in my secondary school classroom, I gave students time for library research and opportunities to redraft their writing.
Yet, “social constructivists” go further to argue that, as teachers, if we are unconcerned with the relationships and social interactions in classroom contexts then we ignore the core processes in which meaningful learning takes place. Students construct understandings as they talk, interact, and reflect on their experiences of the world with others—adults and peers (5).

Our notions of how students learn significantly affect what students learn. It causes me pain that I once implicitly accepted a mechanistic, behavioral view of learning, and thus concentrated on the acquisition of factual information students had to receive from others, especially me. My students learned information but my classroom work did not create self-motivated learners. Drama never became powerful for me until I constructed understandings with students.

But if you embrace the theory, as Jeff and I now do, that people socially construct understandings through joint productive activities, that in fact all complex meanings are actively and continually created with others, then you will begin to see both the importance and the tremendous power and potential of engaging students in dynamic interactions in imaginary situations. Using drama is a way for students to be motivated to use what they know, to learn new information for real purposes, and to create new understandings and theories of the world as they transform and apply this knowledge in new situations. In this way, drama guides students in learning how to learn, how to be aware, and how to be critical.

Grounded in the work of the Russian theorist Lev Vygotsky, social constructivists draw on his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to argue that teaching is an interactive process that builds on the competence of both teacher and student. The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level determined by individual problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (Vygotsky 1978, 86) In other words, teaching should happen in the ZPD, which lies between that which the students can grasp on their own and that which they can reach with the help of others. Tharp and Gallimore (p. 75) describe a powerful alternative to the “instructional” view of education when they emphasize the importance of teachers (and peers) “assisting” students as they “perform” their understandings. As Tharp and Gallimore put it: “teaching can be said to occur when assistance is offered at points in the ZPD at which performance requires assistance.”

Tharp and Gallimore use the term “perform” as a metaphor for the ways in which meanings are created and shared with others—teacher and peers. The connections with the “performance” of drama are obvious. In
classroom drama, as students interact they speak and enact their views and generate new understandings in the talk, writing, and art work that can permeate and surround their work. Meanings are elucidated when written texts are enacted in theatrical kinds of drama which “dramatize at the center of text” with scripts (e.g., story theatre, readers’ theatre, and classroom theatre) as well as in the scriptless kinds of drama that “dramatize at the edges of texts” (e.g., story drama, narrative theatre, process drama) in which the process is the product (Wolf, Edmiston, and Enciso, 1997). A teacher assists performance both from the dramatic sidelines as a “side coach” (Spolin 1963) in conferencing or facilitation, but also as a “teacher in role” (Heathcote 1984) who interacts with students as one of the fictional people in a dramatic world.

In this book, we are mostly concerned with the potential of scriptless process kinds of classroom drama, even though we also show the power of theatrical enactments of scripts that students wrote as a result of their inquiries. The students in Maine performed their prior and new understandings about the medieval world in and around the drama work that centered our week’s work.

**Teacher in Role**

Although students will often agree to pretend that they are experts, interactions with the teacher inside the drama—using the strategy of teacher in role—are crucial in pressing for more depth in understanding. Heathcote pioneered this practice whereby the teacher structures the work from within the drama world by participating alongside the students.

The teacher who uses the strategy of a teacher in roles uses the medium of drama most effectively to enable learning. When the teacher, as well as the students, enters into the world of the drama he or she can speak from the position of any character in a story, any historical figure, or re-express any students' views in order to recontextualize, amplify, extend, or question ideas.

When teachers talk and respond in role, they place interactions firmly in a dramatic present so that participants must interact as if they are in the emerging drama world. Depending on our purposes, and the needs of the students, Jeff and I talked with the students as if we were also archaeologists, trustees, museum curators, or people who needed advice, information, or guidance. At various times alongside the students we became news reporters, marketing agents, and medieval castle servants.

Teacher in role provides a very efficient modality to shape the evolving drama world from the inside. Jeff and I monitored students’ existing and developing understandings. Occasionally, we needed to correct an
error directly that would have a significant effect in the drama world (e.g., one student thought that a medieval king could have had a gun to protect himself). However, usually we choose appropriate responses in role in order to guide students to more accurate or deeper understandings. In role, we could give instructions (as a museum curator, I demonstrated how to use a sword to dub a knight), provide information (as a trustee, Jeff gave geographical location and climate information as he talked with the students about the site), ask questions (as an archaeologist, I asked how they would care for the artifacts they found), and answer questions (as trustees, the students asked Jeff as an NPR news reporter why people in the United States were interested in English history). Further, in role we could indirectly provide details of historical and social contexts (as we talked about the proposed museum), demonstrate a professional stance towards events (as we “reminded” them of our previous work in successful museums), put students in an inquiring frame of mind (as we raised questions to see how they would respond), and provide a model of high expectations from which we could make students aware of their responsibility and the implications of their decisions. We also modeled how in addition to talk in the drama world, participants talk about the drama world—in order to clarify details, shift directions, make connections, and shape understandings.

Most important, working in role alongside the students raised both the status and stature of the students—they were continually treated with respect as knowledgeable, responsible people. Although Jeff and I shared information, ideas, and views with the students, we always genuinely supported them as they created their own understandings. In factual matters, however, students were not free to create whatever understandings they wanted. In thinking about concepts like “history,” “justice,” or “truth,” we wanted students to connect their own life experiences with their experiences in the drama world and to forge new understandings as we interacted with them in the drama. As Heathcote has stressed: “The child . . . is discovering through the situation of the drama. Therefore he is not asking the teacher for the answer, he is offering the teacher a viewpoint and in return the teacher may offer another one” (Heathcote 1984, 85).

By interacting in role we were not just “pretending” to be interested in their ideas. We responded authentically as they both in and out of role shared their prior knowledge, the information they discovered, their genuine questions, and their developing interests. As the week progressed, they became more relaxed with each other and with us, more committed to the work, and more obsessed with the history of the castle.
CONCLUSION

During our last day of the Castle drama, small groups of students wrote stanzas for the ballad about the king's assassination that was sung to the tune of "Greensleeves." The context for writing was preparation for a possible exhibit near the end of the tour of the living history museum in the castle. The students had only twenty minutes to discuss and improvise, after which time the stanzas were put together and performed, to much laughter and delight.

The group decided to call their ballad "Queen Sleeve," and after hearing each other's, organized the stanzas in the following order.

Queen Sleeve (to the melody of "Greensleeves")

1—The Queen

One day the queen was counting
her money upstairs in her chambers.
She heard a cry from the throne below
And ran to find the King dying there.

"The will, the will!" he whispered to her.
"You must get it back, there are secrets there!"

But in his back there was a knife
That she knew to be from the king's brother's house.

2—The Assassin

I stabbed the king until he was dead
And with the will I then ran away
This will might save my people so
I held it so tight in my hand.

If I could find the treasure,
My people could buy lots of bread.
But if I couldn't find it,
then no one would be fed.

3—The Lady in Waiting

The queen she heard a frightful scream
and ran to her beloved King.
I saw her face and heard her gasp as 
she mournfully held her dying love.

The killer laughed an evil laugh 
As he grabbed the will and burned the map.

The gallant knight arrived at last and killed 
the fiend and that was that!

4—The Falcon

This is the tale of a bird of stealth 
Who sees the crimes of the king with wealth 
the king was slain for his evil deeds 
For he killed and slayed for his greedy needs

(To the melody of the chorus of Greensleeves:) 
Death, death to the innocent ones 
Their wives, their daughters and even their sons

Death, death to the innocent ones 
Their wives, their daughters, their hard-working sons.

5—The King's Brother

I loved the sister of the Queen 
And loved the Kingdom of the King 
But He feared me and the Love I bore 
for the people, the serfs and the villeins.

So when he found I knew 
of the treasure deep he had buried there 
He threw me deep in his deepest cell 
And left me so lonely to die there.

But love so true it would last past Death 
Brought my own true love in the dark to me. 
She sent my squire to the King for me 
And my squire so true sought my vengeance!

6—The Queen's Sister, Woman Warrior

A warrior girl from the Queen's own blood 
Led the knights and the people to justice.
So came the war and the castle fell
The people were fed; there's no more to tell.

She became the Queen and much was she loved
Just as she had loved the King's brother.

Each group sang their stanzas. Then as all of the students sang, they showed the action in moving tableaux—very short scenes in which they froze at the climax.

Preparing for the final performances enabled students to synthesize their understandings but provided yet another forum for revising views and making new connections. Meg and Kelsey, for instance, thought that if the assassin was the squire of the King's brother, then he would have had access to the king, which a serf would not. Robin suddenly felt that it needed to be clearer that the Queen's sister rose up against the king's ministers in order to lead the people to justice, much as Joan of Arc did—in response the last stanza was penned in a last minute frenzy.

As students shared their work they were both excited and suffused with feelings of accomplishment. Jeff and I too were excited, when in our final discussion with the students, their comments showed that they had achieved our aim of thinking about the constructed nature of history.

They were struck by the contradictory viewpoints in the ballad. Further, they realized that variant versions would have been received differently by different audiences and that some of these versions might not have survived over time. They regarded them as "facts," as much as any dates or details of artifacts.

Robin, in her role of trustee, said, "In our museum we don't know one single answer to everything, so we have many possible answers and show the lives of people from all their different eyes..."

As an agent of the National Trust, I probed, "Can we ever really know the truth?"

Jessica answered, "Historians are all biased."

Kelsey explained, "Here we want to show the different biases, the different guesses about what and why things might have happened."

Meg added, "We never really know, we just think based on the little things we do know."

Robin concluded the discussion by stating, "The big thing I realized is that an event in history can be explained so many ways and from so many eyes."

Jessica's comments at the end of the work reminded us of the transformative power of drama: "I wish [teachers] would use [drama] more in
schools because I don't like factoids. And schools don't give reasons to be interested. We would like school, or at least it would be bearable if it was like this. We've been learning factoids since first grade—we never learn what things are really like or why. People don't fill in the gaps—they just leave them there. Schoolbooks only put in the things that there's proof of—we don't learn why it's important or why kids should be interested in it."

When we use drama, we follow Jessica's advice—and Heathcote's—as we structure the work "to leave holes, very carefully, so that people fill them up with their own moment of discovery." (Heathcote 1982, 41) We use drama in our work to create relevant, challenging, productive, and authentic sites for student learning and discovery.

Whitehead (1962, 10) argued that "There is only one subject matter for education and that is Life in all its manifestations." Students often like drama because it is "fun" and teachers can justify using drama because it involves studying history or learning language. However, drama is most needed in schools because it expands the horizons of the classroom into the lives people live, have lived, and might live. Drama contextualizes content and ideas that students might otherwise consider arcane or removed from their world; through imagination and interaction with the teacher and other students drama connects the curriculum with students' own lives. As Jerome Bruner (1966, 128) stresses, "drama... is an invitation to reflection about the human condition."

NOTES

1. Dorothy Heathcote (1984) developed awareness of this crucial component of drama.

2. The significance of what I call the double consciousness of drama has been discussed by several scholars: Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1985), Boal (1979), O'Neill (1988), States (1985), and Edmiston (1995). Drama has a "liminal" nature because it exists on the boundary between the individual imagination and the external world. However, unlike other arts, process kinds of drama are made and experienced in the process of interactions among its creators. As a consequence, the world of the drama is both real and fictional; it is actually experienced by the students at the same time they know that they are constructing it. Heathcote describes the two stances of students as participants in the interactions of the drama and spectators on those interactions. O'Neill has noted the added spectator experience of students watching themselves. Bakhtin writes about the importance of understandings being "double voiced" or "dialogic." He analyzed in depth how the novel can be highly dialogic. Although Bakhtin did not regard theatre performances as very dialogic (largely because of the absence of an authorial voice on stage), the dramas we describe in this book are dialogic, espe-
cially when the teacher is actively involved. As teachers, we can shift the students' attention toward either their "single-voiced" experience or toward their "double-voiced" interpretation. We can assist students in their multifaceted ways of experiencing the world or we can assist in a critique of perspectives on the world.

3. This approach is described in detail in Heathcote and Bolton, 1995.

4. Heathcote (1984) has written a provocative and visionary article entitled "The Authentic Teacher and the Future," which is included in her collected writings.

5. Tharp and Gallimore, Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) are among the many social constructivists who have extended Vygotsky's original theories and insights.