Journeying

Children Responding to Literature

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Going up the Beanstalk: Discovering Giant Possibilities for Responding to Literature Through Drama

Brian Edmiston

After reading *Jack and the Beanstalk* with his first-grade class, one teacher pretended to go up the beanstalk with them. They were all in role as neighbors of Jack, and this teacher was using the type of drama I discuss in this chapter. Like Jack, the students were on the lookout for gold, and when some found gold coins, they put them in their pockets. They agreed that they would like to meet the giant, so their teacher pretended to be him and asked them what they had hidden in their pockets. The students were unsure what to say. Some pretended they had no coins; others admitted they had them. When the giant asked them to return the coins, some refused and ran away, while others stayed to negotiate. The students were making up a drama together, but they were also concerned with one theme of the story: taking other people’s things. The students had previously drawn pictures showing what they wanted to do with the gold; later, they negotiated for the release of those who had been caught by the giant and then wrote letters to him.

In all of these activities, the students were responding to literature through drama. This use of drama was pioneered in England by Dorothy Heathcote, and it has been used by Heathcote (1980, 1984, 1990), Gavin Bolton (1985), David Booth (1982), Cecily O’Neill (1982, 1983, 1988), myself (1991a, 1991b), and others to enable students to respond thoughtfully and insightfully to literature.
DRAMA, PLAY, AND CREATIVE DRAMATICS

The experiences that young children have as they read or are read to quite naturally lead them into spontaneous dramatic play in which they imagine that they are characters in what can usefully be called the "story world."[1] Trina Schart Hyman (1981, p. 9) has described how, at age 3, the story world of Little Red Riding Hood "was so much a part of me that I actually became Little Red Riding Hood" for over a year. She dressed in a red cape and hood made by her mother, and her backyard became a forest, her dog was the wolf, and her father the woodcutter. She was clearly responding to the story in her play just as she did years later in her writing and painting for her version of the folk tale that won the Caldecott Honor. Though the story world is normally an imaginary world that individuals create as they read, when children play together they can, in effect, create a shared imaginary story world. Vivian Gussin Paley (see, especially, Paley, 1986) has given us unequalled rich descriptions of how, as part of their unsupervised dramatic play, children interact with and respond to stories without any adult prompting or involvement.

Using drama in the classroom draws on children's natural ability to play. Teachers of creative dramatics do this when they encourage their students to use puppets or act out a story by improvising characters' actions and dialogue in the dramatization of stories (Ward, 1930, 1957; Siks, 1960). Though children may have significant insights into a piece of literature during a dramatization or afterward in a discussion, children and teacher, unfortunately, are too often more concerned with the details of recreating the plot than with considering meaning.

Rather than using drama to help students act out a story, Dorothy Heathcote advocates that teachers should isolate moments from stories to create dramatic encounters in which students of any age may be challenged into new ways of thinking. Heathcote notes that, "Drama is not stories retold in action. Drama is human beings confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges" (1984, p. 48). In drama you “put yourself into 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” (1984, p. 44).

By stressing attention to a person’s point of view or attitude, Heathcote provides a simple but significant solution to the problem

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[1] A reference to "story world" is not meant to imply that drama can only be used with stories. Examples from stories are used in this chapter, but drama can also be used to structure students' responses to novels, poems, and plays.
of how you, as a teacher with a class of thirty or more students, can dramatize an event from a story that has only four or five main characters. Rather than limiting students to imagining that they are the characters in a story, all of the students can take on a role that has the same point of view as a character or another person concerned with the events of the story. For example, Jack’s neighbors going up the beanstalk will have a perspective parallel to Jack’s, and the giant’s friends would view missing gold as theft as much as would the giant Jack meet. Though police officers or social workers do not appear in any version of the tale, they, too, would have a perspective on Jack’s escapades that the teacher might want to explore with the students.

In other words, rather than putting our energies as teachers into getting the story right, we can work with our students to create dramatic situations in which they may all take up perspectives on certain aspects of the story. They may see the story world through the eyes of characters or others, and, in doing so, the students will have experiences from inside the story world. If they reflect on those experiences, they may well discover new insights into the characters, the themes, and themselves.

COMPARING THE EXPERIENCE OF READING WITH DRAMA

Louise Rosenblatt (1968, 1978, 1982) has repeatedly emphasized that response to literature should not be regarded as anything a text may do to the reader but is rather a highly complex ongoing process resulting from each reader’s transactions with texts. Rosenblatt (see, especially, 1978, pp. 69–70) has stressed that we need to be aware of the difference between the text (the words on the page), our aesthetic experiences (or “lived-through evocations”) as we read, reread, and recall texts, and our reflections on those experiences, which we can organize into what may be labelled an interpretation. She stresses that reading must be seen experientially and that, after an initial reading of a text, as teachers” our initial function is to deepen the experience . . . to return to, relive, savor, the experience” (1982, p. 273). Only after such rich experiences and their reflections on them should we expect students to be ready to make or share any meaningful personal interpretation.

These distinctions are important when discussing responding to literature through drama. The text must be distinguished from students’ experiences and reflections. After reading a text, students frequently discuss literature and in doing so continue to experience the events and characters of a story. They also reflect on their experiences, which are then often transformed into speech, writing, and artwork. Janet Hickman (1979) found that, given the
opportunity in the classroom primary-age children will engage in
dramatic play about literature. In play, the children continue to have
experiences with the text if they are paying attention to the charac-
ters’ concerns and thus the themes and issues in a story. These
experiences may well be “lived-through evocations” of their own
sense of what the story means for them. In any interactions during
and after their play, the children often may be reflecting on these
experiences and thus forming interpretations of the story.

Drama can similarly be used with students of all ages. An impor-
tant difference, however, is that in drama the teacher, along with the
students, is structuring the work and is thus affecting both the stu-
dents’ lived-through experiences and their reflections upon them.
During dramatic encounters, students may have rich, deep, and ex-
tended experiences in which they consider the themes, issues, dilem-
as, and implications in literature. Students can also be enabled to
reflect on those experiences both during and after dramatic encoun-
ters so that they can discover and then shape their interpretations into
words, music, drawing, or other ways of sharing a personal response.

STRUCTURING THE WORK SO THAT STUDENTS
RESPOND TO LITERATURE

Though students may be interpreting literature without teacher
intervention, as in play, or with external structuring, as in creative
dramatics, Heathcote (1984) argues that it is the teacher’s responsi-
bility to intervene as the drama is unfolding in order to structure the
work so that such situations occur.

There are two broad ways in which the teacher structures the
work: externally and internally. Externally, the teacher plans and
decides what to require or allow the students to do. This position
can be very passive when the teacher acts like a facilitator or stage
manager of the students’ dramatic play, or it can be much more
active when the teacher sets tasks and takes on the functions of
director and playwright. In any event, the teacher is structuring
from outside the drama. If children eagerly ask “Can we go up the
beanstalk?” then the teacher’s structuring could be to help them
work together, listen to each other, and agree on what they find
there and what they want to happen. And, provided they are all
working productively, the teacher could choose not to intervene if,
for example, they find gold coins and put them in their pockets or
creep into the giant’s closet looking for more gold.

2 Chapter 8 in Purves, Rogers, & Soter (1990) is the only other detailed discussion of
drama and response to literature of which I am aware. Using drama with literature is
considered in most of O’Neill’s illuminating writings, and David Booth’s (1982) use of
“Story Drama” is always concerned with the themes of literature.
However, to challenge the students in a particular way, the teacher can be more active and, for example, suggest and agree with the students that those who crept into the giant's closet were locked in and could not get out. In this way, the teacher is structuring the dramatic encounter so that the students may be challenged in their thinking and response to the situation. The first-grade children who found and then pocketed gold coins had put themselves in a situation that paralleled Jack's decision to take gold from the giant. However, by running away they did not face any of the consequences of their actions. When some of the children pretended to run into the giant's closet, the teacher, in role as the giant, locked them in. After, the students agreed that this had happened, the teacher talked with them in role as the giant. His actions had structured the drama and put the children in a similar situation to the one they had been in before when they were confronted by the owner of the gold coins. However, this time the children had more need to talk to the giant, and it was harder for them to run away because now they would be leaving their friends. The teacher's structuring had put the students into a situation that required them to think more deeply than they had before about whether or not they should keep the stolen gold in their pockets.

Heathcote is well known for her structuring of interactions by the use of "teacher in role," in which the teacher takes on roles alongside the students and interacts with them. This is how the teacher structures internally. For example, in role as the giant, the teacher could confront the children with having to explain why they had gold coins in their pockets and then require them to negotiate with him over the release of their friends. He was responding to their ideas, but through interactions he was keeping their attention on the circumstances in which they might take, keep, or return the coins they had found.

Structuring needs to be quite meticulous if the teacher wants the students to experience and reflect on a particular situation. I recently worked with fifth-grade students on The Journey, a picture book that deals with the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. In my own class, I would have spent time with the students selecting situations to explore through drama, but as I had only limited time with these students I chose a passage in the text that I wanted the students to respond to in depth. Sheila Hamanaka writes, "In 1943, all prisoners in the camps over the age of seventeen were ordered to fill out Loyalty Questionnaires. Would they serve in combat wherever sent? they were asked. Old people and women worried they would be drafted. Also asked: Will you forswear allegiance to the Japanese emperor, Hirohito? . . . 263 were sentenced to prison for resisting the draft" (1990, p. 24).
I planned how to structure the drama so that the students would be able to consider this situation in the drama. Externally, I set tasks that helped the students build up a sense of what it meant to have both a Japanese and an American heritage and to be taken away to a camp: students created "photographs" in small groups, in pairs they took friends on tours of their houses, as a whole group they shared family treasures, and in pairs experienced arrest by the FBI. With everyone (including myself) in role as a detainee, I internally structured the drama by telling the group that I had heard we would be offered our freedom if we renounced any allegiance to the emperor. Then I joined in the discussion about whether or not we should sign a renunciation. What followed was a heated debate. Some of the interactions included the following:

"There must be some mistake, we are Americans."
"I don't want to be American if they treat us like this."
"I have to sign. My poor little baby and when she was born in the concentration camp she would die and if I sign I can never speak of my homeland again but my baby will live to tell the truth about the foolish Americans so it won't happen again."
"I want to go back to Japan where I'll be treated equally. I want to be part of bombing these people that have done this disgusting thing to us."
"That will make us just as evil if we do something to them, just as foolish, as cold-blooded as them. How can you see in this way?"
"We can be American on the outside but inside we can't change being Japanese."

With another group, at a similar point, I switched roles and met them as the camp commander. Again, I was structuring the work internally. In this role, I now could set tasks like asking them to say the pledge of allegiance. I could interact with them and tell those who forswore allegiance to the emperor to line up to be drafted and to take arms; I could show those who refused to say the pledge how disappointed the camp commander was that they would not declare their loyalty.

By structuring and interacting in role with the group, I was able to continue to affect their experiences. I was also able to press them to reflect more deeply than they might have without my presence in role. Those who remained silent were pressed to decide whether or not to speak out. One person asked whether they might be sent to fight their family in Japan if they were drafted. I answered that they would be sent to fight the enemies of the United States. Many scoffed in reply and asked me if I would kill my own relations. I reply that I was a soldier and would do my duty, as they should if
they were loyal Americans. When they were reciting the pledge of allegiance, one person shouted that it was a lie because it did not guarantee liberty and justice for all. She walked forward, stood in front of the recently armed Japanese-Americans, and dared them to kill her. The atmosphere was electric.

The intensity of these students’ feelings and the range of their thoughts did not occur by accident. Just as with all significant moments in classrooms, careful teacher structuring, both externally and internally, in all cases brought the students to situations in which they were challenged in their thinking about aspects of a piece of literature.

In this chapter it is impossible to make more than a brief reference to how teachers might structure work with their own classes. The books and articles noted under “Professional Resources” at the end of this chapter are useful resources, though, of course, only by using drama with our classes can we learn most how to use it.

HOW DRAMA DIFFERS FROM A BOOK DISCUSSION

Before continuing to discuss response to literature through drama in more detail, it is important to note some of the differences between drama and discussion.

As readers, we may go inside a book as we become characters, empathize with them, and critique their actions. However, when we talk about literature, we are always outside our world of the story and are no longer experiencing it except in retrospect. Even if we relive a moment as we share it with a friend, neither of us are inside the story as we talk about it.

Any sharing of responses in the classroom is detached in this way from the previous experiences the readers are describing. This is true whether the students are sharing poems, stories, paintings, enactments, or are discussing their feelings and thoughts about a book.

In drama, however, we can enter the world of the story with others. Our private world of literature can become a drama world, a public shared world of the text in which we can walk around and interact with other people in role. When we interact in role everything we say is significant and related to the story; everything we say and do may be part of an interpretation.

Dorothy Heathcote (1984) uses the phrase “now and imminent time” to describe the feeling that an experience is happening now rather than in the past. In discussion, we stand back and look at events that happened to other people in a different world. In drama, we feel in the middle of events that concern us or are happening to us because in role we are in the same world as the story.
What we say and do within the drama is not just a detached comment about the world of the story. On the contrary, every action and inaction affects that world directly and affects the person we imagine ourselves to be in the drama world. For example, when the students in the role of Japanese-Americans were asked to stand up and recite the pledge of allegiance, whether they stood up became significant and changed what was happening at that moment. The students were not making a detached decision about "what I would do if I were in the camp," this decision had to be made and acted upon by students who were feeling "what will I do now that I am in this camp?" Even inaction affected the situation because those students who stayed seated in effect were saying to the others that they would not say the pledge. Those who did stand were accepting the authority of the commander and were emphasizing the inaction of the others. Thus the students' words and actions, as well as those of the teacher, affect the experiences the students have in the drama world.

Nevertheless, students do stand back to reflect on what is, has been, or may be happening in drama. We can discuss drama work in the same way as we discuss a book, either after or during reading, by sharing our thoughts and feelings about the events that occur or may occur in the drama. We can do this by stopping to talk, just as we do when we pause in reading and when we discuss at the conclusion of a piece of work.

However, in drama, we can also reflect from inside the drama as it is being created. Reflection inside the drama and reflection in an ordinary discussion differ in that when we are in the drama we are not only able to look at the significance of events and interpret them as "ourselves" but we can also do this from the perspective of the person we are pretending to be. This double perspective seems to create the possibility of what Gavin Bolton (1985) calls "a unique subjective/objective relationship with the world" that promotes "the kind of understanding any writer whose subject matter is human life must have in abundance." Clearly, as teachers, we want to promote a similar understanding in our students' readers.

For example, as has been noted, the students' reactions within The Journey drama became part of their overall experience of the situation. But this experience then meant that they could continue to reflect, both in role and as themselves, on their own and others' actions. In doing so, they could ponder the significance and thus discover their meaning of the situation.

These two responses to the situation, in and out of role, may be quite different. A student may agree with a statement or action in role, but disagrees with it in actual life (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1990, p. 108). This contradiction can increase the awareness that a response to an experience is not automatic but can be a matter of
choice. The choice may not be easy. The harder the choice, however, the more dramatic a situation is and, thus, the more thinking a student will do to wrestle with the difficulty. Inevitably, this process must result in more thoughtful responses to literature.

DRAMA AS A SHARED CONTEXT FOR RESPONSE

Response is not static. As Louise Rosenblatt reminds us, it is a dynamic, ongoing experience of our transaction with the text. Response should be responding and continuing to respond as we see more implications in the events of a story, understand more of the feelings and motivations of the characters, and draw more parallels between the world of the book and the experiences of our own lives.

When we read and think about books, we may each create rich, complex, and very realistic imaginary story worlds that we explore and respond to (Enciso Edmiston, 1990). But by pretending to go up the beanstalk together, the teacher and his first-grade students created a shared imaginary drama world that paralleled and drew on the world of the story and in which they were able to share responses. Thus, because everyone was creating the reality of the imaginary world up the beanstalk, each individual's attitudes and responses could affect and be affected by what others, as well as the teacher, said and did.

Drama is a group art; you can only create drama when people interact. When the focus of their interactions is a literature text, then they are collectively responding to that literature. The different responses of participants can result in a deeper consideration of a theme, so that responses may become more complex.

Before meeting the giant, the first-grade students who went up the beanstalk considered the morality of killing him. Their teacher noted that, "Some wanted to kill the giant so nobody would get caught and it would be easy to take his gold. Others said that was murder. What a lively discussion!" Ordinarily a teacher might feel uncomfortable discussing killing, but in considering what they might do to take the gold this option was a seriously argued position of these first-grade students and is clearly an aspect of the original story. Significantly, however, the students, rather than the teacher, eventually convinced each other that it would be wrong to kill the giant.

They also considered whether it was right to take his gold. They challenged each other's ideas and considered when taking money might not be wrong. Their teacher wrote, "Kristen was very adamant that it was all right to take the gold from the giant because they were so poor. Katie was equally strong in her belief that steal-
ing is always wrong. The class was divided. During the discussion Sarah changed her mind about taking things but wanted to go to the giant’s castle just to see how big everything would be.”

The class was unable to reach consensus on the right action, though Sarah provided them with a way of agreeing to disagree. This solution was sufficient until they discovered that some people had taken gold coins and that the giant had captured some of their friends. Then they had to consider whether they should return the gold, and they had to agree. “Let’s only take one gold coin,” said Adam, who earlier had argued in favor of taking all the money and now said that they did not have to return it all. Allie, however, responded, “That’s still stealing.” In the ensuing discussion it was eventually decided, with Adam’s consent, to return all the gold coins to the giant in exchange for their friends.

The reality of the drama world allowed these students to discuss and argue about important interpretations of their experiences of this story. Here was a “community of readers” (Hepler & Hickman, 1982) who were sharing their responses and thereby affecting each other’s reading of the text. However, because they were interacting with each other and the teacher in an imaginary situation, they could challenge each other in role and do so in the context of situations in which their decision made a difference. Taking money had to be weighed against the lives of their friends, and they had to listen to each other and decide together what to do. Individuals may have changed their attitudes because it was appropriate and protected for these students to share their responses and interpretations with each other in a way that allowed for the possibility of deepening and questioning the initial responses.

STANCES IN DRAMA AND READING

As teachers, we may want students to find out facts, information, or significant ideas as they read, but with literature we also want them to experience the work as a whole so that they will “stir up personal feelings, ideas, and values” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 259) and be changed by what they read. Rosenblatt made the significant observation that we take up an efferent stance when we read for information and an aesthetic stance when we read for experience. Our purposes for reading are quite different in each case. Though efferent reading of literature may be important, she argues that aesthetic reading must precede it.

In drama there is always an overall aesthetic stance because students are interacting and thinking about events and actions that happen in an imaginary world. Details and descriptions in a text are all read in the wider context of the drama world. When the drama world is woven from the fabric of a piece of literature, then if the
words or images from the text are referred to in the drama they will naturally be interpreted holistically. For example, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* was read to a class of fifth-grade students, and as soon as the class agreed to imagine they were the lawyers for the wolf and began to discuss his case, every reference to details of exactly what the wolf said he had done was made in the context of the entire story. This approach was clear from the students’ repeated references to the story in their interactions.

In role, the students may take an efferent and/or an aesthetic stance. For example, as lawyers for the wolf, the students were very concerned with some of the particular phrases the wolf gave in his statement. They focused on facts and details but always within the overall stance of their reaction to his statement as a whole. As the drama proceeded, the lawyers decided what the wolf might be charged with, what his defense might be, and if found guilty what his punishment might be. In order to discuss these issues the students needed both an aesthetic stance and an efferent one. They had to see the wolf’s actions within the wider context of his relationships with others, but also needed to consider the specifics of what he said and did. In doing both, the students returned to the text, which had been typed as if it were a statement made by the wolf. As the lawyers interviewed potential witnesses, visited the wolf’s home, and went to the police station, the students continued to reread the text as they checked what he had said and how reliable they thought his statement was. For example, most were impressed with his analogy between a wolf eating a pig and humans eating a cheeseburger, but many began to think it implausible that he would go to borrow sugar from three pigs, even if they were all neighbors. The students in role as lawyers were paying attention both to the details of the text but also to the text as a whole. Later in the drama when they studied photographs taken by the press (illustrations from the book), the lawyers realized that the police and newspaper reporters were pigs. Then they began to question whether they could believe what had been said or written by the police or reporters any more than what the wolf and his granny had said. Throughout this drama the students were considering one of the central themes of this picture book: the truth of a story depends on who is telling the tale.

In this work, the text had been available for the students’ reference. However, though a text can be read as part of the drama, it does not need to be read in role to be the basis of a drama. The interactions in the ensuing drama may still be an ongoing interpretation and response with an aesthetic and/or efferent stance, as they were with all the dramas referred to in this chapter. For example, the fifth-grade students who had read *The Journey*, the picture book about the internment of the Japanese-Americans during World War II,
did not reread the text during a two-hour drama session, but they repeatedly made implicit references to the events and experiences of being interned that are so graphically recounted in the text.

DIFFERENT FRAMES OF REFERENCE GIVE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

As well as taking an overall efferent or aesthetic stance in drama, students adopt this stance from a particular perspective. Heathcote has borrowed the term “frame” from sociology (Goffman, 1974) to emphasize that just as a person’s perspective on events in everyday life is determined by that person’s sociological role, so in drama the role we play gives us a particular frame of reference that implies a certain power and responsibility (Heathcote, 1984, 1990). For example, the lawyers for the wolf have the responsibility to prepare a defense and the power to interview and gain access to people, places, and documents. The police have similar power, but no responsibility to defend the wolf. The wolf’s family may want to defend him, but they have little power once he is arrested. Each individual in these roles views the same events differently, and in considering response to the story, each reads the same statement by the wolf in a different way because of the different frame of reference.

When we ask students to respond thoughtfully to literature, we are asking for more than initial ideas. We want readers to consider events from the perspectives of characters, but we also expect them to stand back from the work and critique it. We want more than a bland “I like it” and expect students of all ages to be able to appreciate some of the complexities of a book by seeing it from different points of view. Emyrs Evans (1987, p. 36) argues that “the more viewpoints we are offered . . . the more complex, and so the more thought-provoking and significant, the text and the work become.” He is describing how the reader’s viewpoint moves during the act of reading a text, but he could equally be describing how, by reframing the class, the teacher can shift the viewpoint of the students during a drama.

One drama with sixth-grade students began with reading Nettie’s Trip South, which is written in the form of a letter by a young girl describing her impressions during a trip with her journalist brother to the South just before the Civil War. In the drama, the students’ frame shifted as they took on the roles of present-day museum curators setting up an exhibit about slavery, newspaper reporters at that time looking at photographs of enslaved people and writing reports, abolitionists meeting to decide what to do about a runaway in their town, museum curators looking at images of the effects of war, and finally as citizens meeting to decide how to advise their
senator to vote on the proposal to go to war. Students interacted, wrote, read, pretended they were in photographs, and spent nearly two hours responding to the book. By the time they were in role as citizens, they had transformed themselves from a reticent giggling group who offered no opinions on what they thought about slavery to a group whose talk had to be stopped so that they could go to their next class.

Students had taken up multiple perspectives that included characters in the story but also perspectives on the story world as a whole. From the point of view of an enslaved person, one student wrote, “The pain was unbearable as I was beaten.” Another, after visiting the present-day “museum,” described a slave auction as a journalist at that time: “The black slave was standing with her son on the stage. My eyes opened wide as people started bidding on the mother. . . . I almost started shouting and crying when two black men came on stage and yanked the two apart. The expression on the mother’s face was of pure horror as she started screaming. The boy’s shouts were lost in the laughter that followed. And then it went on again, another slave stepping forward as if it was the most natural thing in the world.” One student wrote a letter to the newspaper from the perspective of an abolitionist: “We must take action. I have stood by watching slaves being beaten and sold like property long enough. How much longer can we let blacks undergo this torture? How much more pain can they take? We must speak out about our beliefs no matter what the consequences are. God created us equal.” When they considered the consequences of war and the possibility of seeing their own children die, many students in role as citizens were less enthusiastic about rushing into conflict. Some vocal boys argued that attacking the plantations was a solution, and some said the slave owners should be killed. However, as one girl said quietly, “We can’t kill slave owners because then we would be no better than they were.”

At the conclusion of the drama, the same girl, writing as “herself,” said: “I never knew slavery was that wrong. I guess I grew up in the wrong generation.” Many commented on how they had felt they were really back in the time of slavery. One student concluded, “If only everyone who is prejudiced took this class, I’m sure they would become aware of the wrongness and cruelty slavery brought to our country.”

By shifting perspectives and experiencing events from the frame of reference of different people with different concerns, the students had been able to see Nettie’s Trip South through multiple lenses. They drew on whatever attitudes they had to slavery as they interacted and transformed their responses into words and actions. As the drama continued, they were able to see more and more perspectives, so that the discussion about going to war had multi-
faceted reasoning as well as being intense and passionate. Some argued that they had to defend the defenseless; others said that it would only make matters worse for everyone. One quietly asked "Would you die for someone else?" in response to a call to attack the South. Some said they could not fight their relations, and others said they did not know what to do.

These students were clearly responding to their many different experiences of the world of Nettie's Trip South. They had considered from many perspectives the book's brief but significant reference to the impending war and descriptions of Nettie's reactions to visiting a plantation, having to see a slave auction, and questioning of slavery. This classroom drama took place in May 1991, during the aftermath of the Gulf War and the debate over rescuing the Kurds, so who knows what ideas and feelings about war these students were drawing on and reexamining as they interpreted this story?

MODES OF RESPONSE TO LITERATURE THROUGH DRAMA

Many references have been made in this chapter to students' talk in role. Because drama involves the whole person, it cannot exist without interactions. As has been shown, students can respond deeply and sincerely as they interact and talk with each other and with the teacher.

However, within the drama students can transform their feelings and thoughts in other ways to form interpretations. Some mention has been made of writing in role. For example, first-grade students wrote letters to the giant, and sixth-grade students wrote accounts of what they had seen in the South and newspaper articles and headlines about slavery. The possibilities for writing in role are countless. For example, the lawyers for the wolf could have taken notes as they interviewed or written letters to potential witnesses, and the Japanese-Americans could have written diary entries, haiku, or letters to Congress. Writing in role frequently flows naturally from the drama, and students want to write because they have something to say and someone to write to (Edmiston, Enciso, & King, 1987; Wagner, 1985). Of course, students can write as "themselves" at any time as they stand back from the work and respond to it as a whole.

Similarly, students may want to draw or paint in or out of role. For example, students might draw pictures of the giant's castle or paint the view from inside an internment camp cell. They may draw alone or paint together—for example, by drawing a mural or making a map.

Drama uses more than words; people are continually moving in drama. Movement or dance can easily be part of a drama; for
example, students could show the dreams of the Japanese-Americans as they moved to some Japanese music. Less threatening is the use of depictions or tableaux where students represent photographs, statues, portraits, films, or other static or moving images (Heathcote, 1980).

All of these modes of response can be integrated into the drama and form aspects of ongoing and evolving interpretations by the students of their experiences in the drama. They can also form a culmination or concluding response that incorporates individual responses but collectively builds a shared response. For example, students in role as survivors of the Japanese-American internment stood as statues in a memorial. They took up poses as guards, non-Japanese-Americans, and the people who had been interned. Visually they represented a diversity of emotions from anger and resignation to strength and determination. Orally they provided a montage of voices; as they stepped into the statue they spoke messages for all U.S. citizens. These included:

"We're all different and we should be proud of all of our cultures."
"I've been in concentration camps, my sister's died, and my daughter's gone away, but I know one thing after living through all I've gone through: you've got to be good to yourself and when doing that you can't be bad to anyone else. You try to be the best person you can be and in doing that you don't hurt anyone else."
"Nobody needs to know who you are, as long as you know who you are that's all that matters."
"When I was young my mother and father would tell me about it and I wouldn't really care. . . . I didn't know what they were talking about, but now I do I'm going to act on it, I'm going to do something, I'm going to write something, draw something . . . do something to show we care."
"Educate. Tell the truth. Write what actually happened in the social studies textbook."
"Even if it is an opinion, it is the truth, We have to speak out no matter what."
"Nobody can change anybody else, it's that person that has to change themselves. The only way we can help is to say, 'This is what's going to happen if you do this.' We can tell them what happened and show them. You need to go by what you believe in."

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

To ignore the power of drama in the classroom is to overlook the potential of using the basic human ability of imagination to foster and deepen students' responses to literature. In drama, students can have lived-through interactive experiences inside the worlds of lit-
erature in addition to their talk about books. And by reflecting during as well as after their experiences in drama, students have more opportunity to deepen their responses and influence each other as they form their interpretations.

Any literature text can be explored through drama. As teachers, we do not need to develop lengthy or complex dramas in order to tap into the power of drama. Nor do we have to allow students to run around and be destructive. We can start by considering what roles would give students different perspectives on the text as a whole or on the dilemmas or problems faced by characters or narrator. We then can plan to interact in role with our students for a few minutes and use all we already know about learning, grouping, motivation, self-discipline, and our classes as groups in order to have a successful beginning. And, in my experience, students usually beg for more chances to work in drama—a reassuring position for any teacher to be in.

As teachers, we can enjoy playing with texts and exploring with our students different viewpoints on worthy literature. Rosenblatt (1982, p. 276) extols "the potentialities of literature for aiding us to understand ourselves and others, for widening our horizons, to include temperaments and cultures different from our own, for helping us to clarify our conflicts in values, for illuminating our world." Drama can help us realize these potentialities provided that we are prepared to go up the beanstalk with our students and explore what is there.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES


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