



RECREATE THE LIFE OF A FAMOUS ARTIST

General Objective

In this practical sheet our main objective is to create a role playing game related to a few key points of the life of famous artists. We will see ways to engage the students to take part in the game and play a character.

In this practical sheet, you will:

- ✓ Learn information about the life and works of a famous European artist
- ✓ Learn how to prepare the workshop by finding the info need and make a plan for the upcoming activity
- ✓ learn the basics of role-playing game and how to motivate participants with SLDs

You will need:

- ✓ Internet/library access
- ✓ Computer with printer and printing paper
- ✓ Various objects relative to the artist portrayed like a hat, or a strange piece of cloth, a fake moustache etc.

Challenges and issues

Unfortunately, there are misconceptions out there that suggest adults with learning disabilities cannot enjoy the theatre or be effective actors and actresses. Actually, some of our most successful actors have overcome learning disabilities like dyslexia and dyspraxia. While some aspects of drama, like reading or memorizing lines, may be a challenge for adults with learning disabilities, there are plenty of fun activities involving drama that don't require



reading. Drama activities can be a great way to help people with learning disabilities practice public speaking and engage in the more physical aspects of acting. Involving them in drama activities is a great way to develop communication skills, public interactions, and overall confidence.

Creating an activity for students by asking them to participate in a workshop that reminds a play is a way to explore their personalities and express their feelings. It's active and can often make learning memorable.

In general there are some students, and not only those with special learning needs, who will find some form of drama activities, or even the drama space itself, challenging. Non-classroom environments, group or pair work, performance, touch, open space, dialogues and self-expression can all present challenges. All of the well-known 'accessibility' techniques apply equally to drama: displays on the wall; a welcoming environment; a variety of activities and methods; art-based activities; writing together on large sheets of paper; employing costume, props and multimedia to support the work, and using both teacher- and student-led exercises.

Think about which activities will be challenging for students with special needs and aim to structure them tightly, in terms of classroom management and space, and also of transition into and out of them. It also helps not to present too many challenges at once, so try not to combine, for example, challenging group structures with work on a difficult issue. If an activity is difficult for some students, you can create safety nets or cushions, using drama techniques to help. These are discussed below.

The secret is to keep the workshop simple and aim for learning and fun. If the activity is not stressful for the participants then they will be more open in the experience.

If a theatrical play is chosen or dialogues are written for recreating a scene from an artist's life for the activity, then keep in mind any issues that may appear if basic skills are required in an activity, you can use safety nets or cushions. Here are some reading cushions:



- Teach a line of dialogue using repetition and gesture before reading it.
- Read two lines of dialogue together as an introduction before going on to group work.
- Read a whole piece of text in mixed ability pairs or threes so that students can help each other.
- Create a wall display and an improvisation based on an aspect of the text before reading it. For instance, use a display of a street scene showing antagonism between two families, before learning two lines of the prologue to Romeo and Juliet using gestures and repetition, as an introduction to the play.
- Introduce other activities where students who find reading difficult will have their particular strengths championed and match these to reading activities.

In this section, state why you thought this topic would be relevant to your audience. Identify the difficulties and challenges that your practical tool, advice, workshop or tutorial is solving.

Ex: Explaining the role of SLDs in a student's learning process, presenting the usefulness of a specific website, introducing the utility of art games in art workshops, etc.

Adaptation

Improvisation the art of making up a story line, complete with characterization within a structure of space and time. Improvisation is the art of imagination to the highest in the theatre world. Many of our most creative comics come from an improvisation background. Thinking quickly, continuing a story, relating to others in a group just from the imagination. We start with four actors on the stage. The teacher gives the location of where the actors are. The teacher give each acting student a character. They have the



scenario, location and characterization. We let them explore the story line. They have already been introduced to beginning/middle/end- now it's truly applied. You can have your students go anywhere the mind takes them. The circus, school, the ocean, pirates, astronauts, and allow them to create and develop their own world. The characters will be driven by the story line the class gives.

Improvisation happens in the everyday world. From the minute we get up in the morning, we go through our own play and interact with many “characters” throughout the day.

Use this structure to reinforce whatever you are trying to teach them in class. This goes a long way and gets the students up and thinking, acting and reacting and learning to utilize the creative they have inside of them. Learning utilizing creative theatre games can be fun for everyone and very expressive.

Practical examples and inspiration

First step is to decide the artist that is going to be portrayed in the activity. It could be an artist's painting, or theatrical play. Even a myth. Keep in mind that in the latter ones a scene should be picked in order for the recreation. The activity should not take a long time to be executed by the actors/students. In that way we can keep engaged everyone in the class. Create a quick script with basic dialogues. The text and interaction should be at a minimum level in order for the participants to use improvisation.

Present the artist and the script you created to the participants. Talk about the story at hand and answer any questions. Try to merge the students in the story and have them discuss various topics from their lives that have a resemblance with the story given. Keep the discussion light and proceed with a quick script reading from the participants.

Do not be strict with the script. Let the students take the story where ever they want. The main issue with this activity is to learn to adapt and have fun. The

roles should be divided and try to keep everybody happy. A feeling of challenge has to be present for the participants to be more engaged. Assist the participants by reminding them how the story evolves.

In an alternative approach of the activity the teacher can have the students to mime the script with gestures and face expressions and not using speech. The same approach by the teacher can be applied here with a few tweaks to accommodate the lack of speech.



Music can be used for the duration of the activity that complements the “play”, a soundtrack from a movie adaptation, a list of songs etc.

Additional resources

- **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** “Arts On The Move” provides drama teaching resources for schools, youth theatres, drama groups and young actors.
- [Theatre and Education: Creating the Creative Student with Disabilities, Deborah Nowinski](#)



- Special Talents, Special Needs: **Drama** for People with Learning Disabilities, Ian McCurrach, Barbara Darnley, ISBN13 9781853025617, Publisher Jessica Kingsley Publishers, Publication date 01 May 1999
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQYCjyFxzqY&t=2s> Julia Brown has drawn on her experiences with learning disabilities to highlight the benefits of art education for others facing similar struggles.

