



## D1 ■ Fun and Easy Drama Activities

Lower, Middle and Upper Primary

# Blake's Topic Bank

# Drama Warm-Ups

by **Tim Tuck**



### **This Topic Bank:**

- contains 28 fun and easy drama activities
- is suitable for lower, middle and upper primary students

## SYMBOLS USED ON THE ACTIVITY CARDS:



suitable for lower primary  
and upwards



suitable for middle primary  
and upwards



suitable for upper primary



whole class activity



large group activity



small group activity



pairs

### Prompt

Tips to help the activity run smoothly

### Second Act

Ideas to extend or adapt the activity

## A NOD'S AS GOOD AS A WINK



### You need:

- ☛ clear area

1. Have students stand in a circle.
2. Make eye contact with one student.
3. Say this student's name out loud. This student should nod to you in acknowledgment. Walk towards the student you named and take their place in the circle.
4. Simultaneously, the student who has been named should make eye contact with another student, and call this student's name.
5. As soon as a student has named another student and received their nod, the first student should begin moving to their new position.

### Prompt

- ☛ The naming and moving should occur together, so that all students arrive at an empty spot.

### Second act

- ☛ Younger students can start with just saying another student's name and nodding.

## EYES RIGHT



### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Define a clear play area.
2. Have students walk slowly through the area.
3. Call out 'freeze!'. Students should be completely still.
4. Call out 'eyes right!'. Students make eye contact with one other student. Each student calls out the other student's name.
5. Call out 'move!'. Students continue moving through the area.
6. Repeat several times.

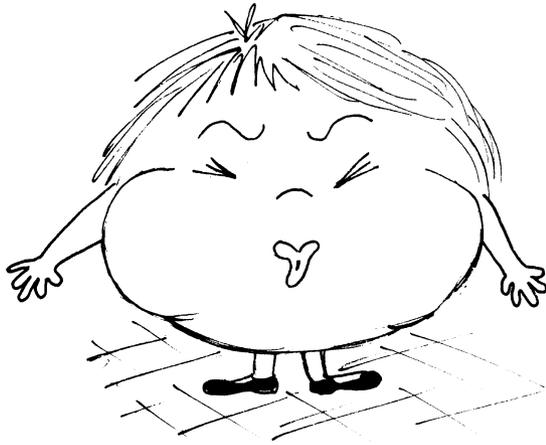
### Prompt

- ☛ Ensure students choose a new student to make eye contact with each time.

### Second act

- ☛ Call out a different way of moving after each 'eyes right'. Some suggestions—move like a leopard, move in slow motion, move like a snail or move timidly.





## THE BIG POPPER



### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Define a large, safe play area.
2. Choose someone to be the Big Popper.
3. Send your class into the play area.
4. Tell the class to flatten out like deflated balloons.
5. Ask the class to inflate themselves, while you count to ten.
6. Tell the balloons to drift about the area.
7. Send in the Big Popper to tag, and then pop the 'balloons'.
8. Tagged balloons must pop dramatically, then lie flat on the ground.

### Prompt

- ☛ Ensure students avoid stepping on flattened 'balloons' lying on the floor.

### Second act

- ☛ Have a Big Popper and a Small Popper.
- ☛ Choose other students to be a prickly rosebush, a barbed wire fence, an echidna or other spiky objects.
- ☛ Allocate a colour to small groups of 'balloons'. Call out the colour and have balloons pop spontaneously.

## PADDLING AT THE BEACH



### You need:

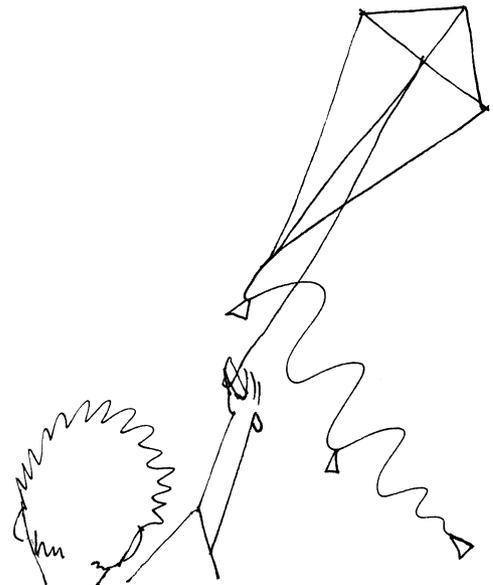


- ☛ large, open play area

1. Divide your class into groups of four or five students.
2. Select a student as starter (Student 1).
3. Student 2 turns to Student 1 and asks, 'What are you doing?'.
4. Student 1 (doing nothing) says 'I'm paddling at the beach.'
5. Student 2 mimes paddling at the beach.
6. Student 3 turns to student 2 and asks 'What are you doing?'.
7. Student 2 describes a different action such as 'I'm flying a kite.'; 'I'm mowing the lawn.'; or 'I'm arranging flowers.'.
8. Student 3 mimes this action.
9. Continue around the circle until all students have had a turn at miming an action.

### Prompt

- ☛ The actions described by students can be any physical movement, except the action each student is actually doing!



# MIRRORS



## You need:

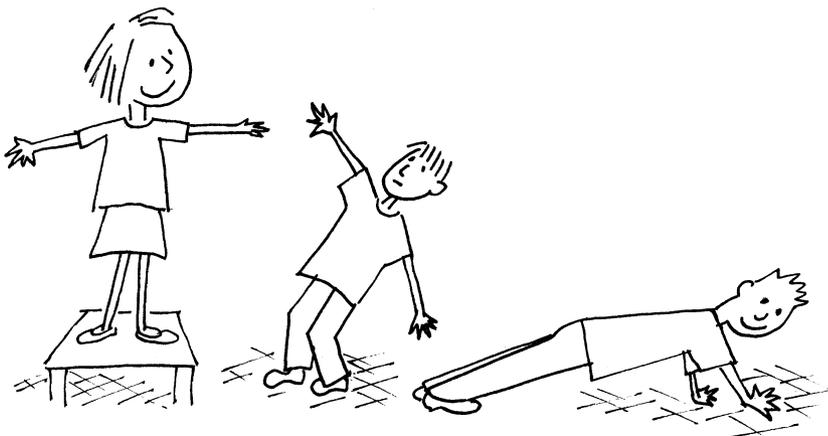


- ☛ large, open play area

1. Have students form pairs. One student is the leader and the other is the mirror.
2. Students should face each other.
3. The leader starts an action and the mirror attempts to copy (and anticipate) the action.
4. Suggested actions are:
  - ☛ basic hand, arm, head or torso movements
  - ☛ brushing hair or teeth
  - ☛ drinking a bottle of soft drink
  - ☛ getting dressed
  - ☛ applying sunscreen
5. Students swap roles.

## Second act

- ☛ Form groups of three with one leader and two mirrors.
- ☛ Have the mirror lie on the ground and become a pool of water.
- ☛ Play 'Shadows'. The mirror follows several steps behind the leader, copying their movements and actions.
- ☛ Play 'Pretty Polly'. The mirror parrots everything the leader says.



# ON THE LEVEL



## You need:



- ☛ large, open play area

1. Establish the play area.
2. Divide your class into groups of four or five students.
3. Instruct each group to walk around in a small circle.
4. Call out the command 'freeze'.
5. Each group must line up facing the teacher, so that no members reach the same level (height). Have students consider standing, crouching, kneeling, sitting or lying down.

## Second act

- ☛ Place a chair or block in the centre of each circle to widen the possibilities for achieving different levels.
- ☛ Divide the class into groups which include a mixture of heights. When you call 'freeze', the group must line up with the tops of their heads level.



## FRIENDS

### You need:

- ☛ a chair for each student



1. Sit your class on chairs in a circle, with students facing each other.
2. Select a student to stand in the centre of the circle. Remove this student's chair from the circle.
3. The student in the centre approaches a seated student and asks, 'Do you like your friends?'
4. The seated student can make either of the following responses:
  - ☛ 'Yes, I like my friends.'. At this response, the two students either side of the seated student must swap places, before the centre student can sit in either of their chairs.
  - ☛ 'No, I don't like my friends, but I do like people with ...', and inserts a description such as sandals, long brown hair, or glasses. All students who fit the description must then swap seats, while the centre student attempts to sit in one of the vacated chairs.
5. If the centre student gains a seat, the displaced student begins a new round. If not, the centre student approaches another student.

### Prompt

- ☛ Seated students who repeat a description have to relinquish their seat to the centre student.

## HALL OF MIRRORS



### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Have your class stand in a circle.
2. Select a student to act as starter.
3. Instruct the starter to adopt a pose.
4. The student to the right of the starter mirrors the pose, but then changes one aspect of it, such as moving an arm higher, tilting the head to one side, or lowering the torso closer to the ground.
5. The next student on the right mirrors this latest pose; again one part of the pose is then altered.
6. Continue around the circle of students.

### Prompt

- ☛ Aim for a 'Mexican wave' type effect, with the mirrored poses and changes flowing around the circle.

### Second act

- ☛ Change direction and mirror from the left.
- ☛ Attempt to mirror in both directions simultaneously!
- ☛ Younger students can start off by simply mirroring the pose. Changing poses can be added when they become more proficient.



# SMUGGLERS



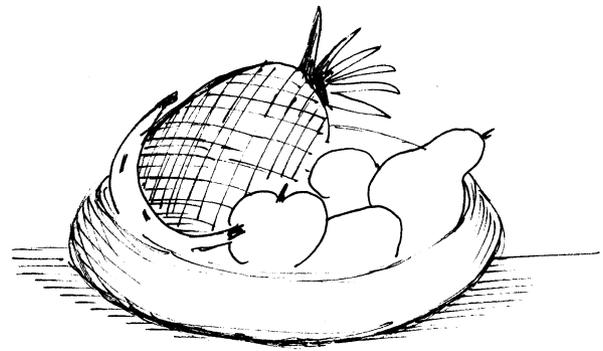
## You need:

- ☛ a tennis ball

1. Sit your class in a circle.
2. Select a student. Ask them to wait outside the room.
3. Inform the class that they will be smuggling a tennis ball. Give the ball to a starter student.
4. Tell the class that you will be inviting the student waiting outside to return, and they must keep the ball away from this student by passing it around the circle behind their backs.
5. Ask the student from outside to come back in. Tell this student they have three attempts to guess who has the ball.
6. Students keep their hands behind their backs and either pass, or pretend to pass, the ball behind their backs around the circle.
7. The guessing student may move around the inside of the circle but they only have a set time to make their three guesses.

## Second act

- ☛ Increase the number of guessing students to make it more difficult for the smugglers.
- ☛ Increase the number of tennis balls to make it more difficult for the guessing student(s).



# FRUIT SALAD



## You need:

- ☛ a chair for each student

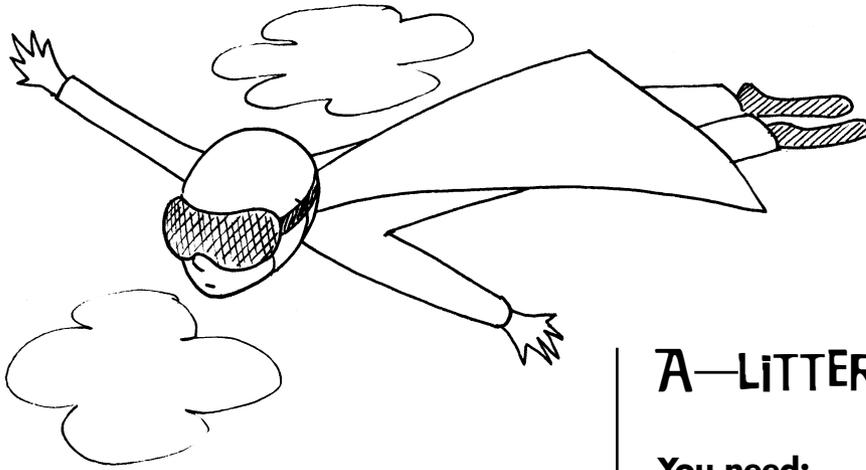
1. Have students sit on chairs in a circle.
2. Assign names to students around the circle, for example apple, orange, peach, pear, until each student has a fruit name.
3. Select a student to stand in the centre of the circle as the fruit vendor. Remove their chair from the circle.
4. The fruit vendor calls out a fruit. All students known as this fruit swap places. As they vacate their chairs, the fruit vendor attempts to gain a seat.
5. Whoever is left without a seat becomes the new fruit vendor.
6. The fruit vendor can call 'fruit salad' to force all students to exchange places.

## Prompt

- ☛ Watch for rough play and adjacent students swapping seats.

## Second act

- ☛ Use different categories and 'all move phrases', for example sports (all move on Olympics); vegetables (all move on stew), animals (all move on zoo), plants (all move on garden), teachers (all move on staff meeting) or planets (all move on solar system).
- ☛ Use characteristics of students'. The centre student could call out a hair colour, shoe style, gender or article of clothing.



## FORMATION FLYING

### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area



1. Select a student to be the volunteer 'wing-commander'.
2. Form lines of aircraft behind the wing-commander, each line having one more student than the line before. The final formation should resemble a triangle, with the wing-commander as the focus point.
3. Instruct the wing-commander to perform aerial acrobatics on the spot, such as swoops, dives, glides, flaps, loops and turns.
4. Each line behind the wing-commander attempts to copy the acrobatics.

### Second act

- ☛ Rotate students to act as the wing-commander.
- ☛ If space permits, attempt moving the entire formation about the room.
- ☛ Play with smaller groups of six students, in 1-2-3 formation.

## A—LITTER—ATION



### You need:

- ☛ clear area

1. Ask your class to sit in a circle.
2. Tell students to imagine they have been picking up litter around the school, and that each student has returned with a piece of litter which uses the same letter as their given name.
  - ☛ 'I'm Jessica and I picked up a jam sandwich.'
  - ☛ 'I'm Robby and I picked up a rotten apple.'
  - ☛ 'I'm Ali and I picked up an aluminium can.'
3. Have students take turns to state their name and the piece of litter they have collected:

### Second act

- ☛ Accumulate as well as alliterate. Have students repeat the name and litter of each student who has spoken before them, as well as their own.
- ☛ Instead of litter use adjectives, colours, food, sports, countries or animals.

# FIVE...FOUR...THREE...



## You need:

- ☛ large, open play area
- ☛ stereo
- ☛ music tape or CD

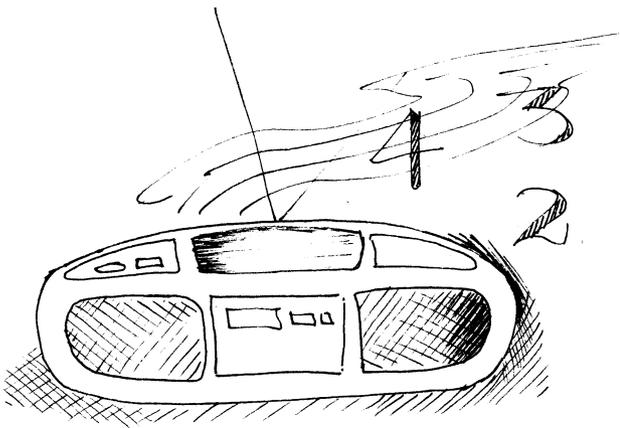
1. Establish the play area.
2. Have students move around the area to music.
3. Stop the music and call out 'Groups of five in five...four...three...two...one...stop!'.
4. Students must form a group of the designated size before you have finished counting down.

## Prompt

- ☛ Play this game to practise forming groups quickly. Then use it to form groups for other games.
- ☛ To ensure fairness, introduce the rule that students may not be with the same students twice in a row.

## Second act

- ☛ Play as a knockout game. Any students not in a group are disqualified from the game.
- ☛ Don't call out the group size. Instead beat the group size number on a drum. You can also use the drum for the countdown.



# BUTTON UP



## You need:

- ☛ button (or piece of cloth, empty cardboard box, pebble or seashell)

1. Ask students to sit in a circle.
2. Show students a button.
3. Tell students it's not really a button; it's really a dot that's fallen off an enormous die.
4. Pass the button to a student.
5. Explain to students that they are meant to think of a different purpose for the prop. Instruct the first student to say 'No, it isn't a dot off an enormous die, it's really...', and they add their own idea, such as 'a secret agent's hidden microphone.'.
6. Continue passing the button around the circle, with each student disclaiming the previous student's idea and stating their own.

## Second act

- ☛ Change the button for a piece of cloth, empty cardboard box, pebble, length of wood, piece of metal piping, scrap of paper, piece of wire, leaf, seashell, strand of wool or lump of plasticine.
- ☛ Allow students who cannot think of a new identity for the prop to say 'Yes, I agree, it is really a ...', before passing the item on.
- ☛ Form groups of students and give each group one of the items they have passed around. Have students create a short play that uses four or five of the ideas.





## SORTA SOMETHING

### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area



1. Sit your class in a circle.
2. Start a solid pat-clap rhythm.
3. Choose a starter student.
4. In time with the rhythm have the class chant:  
 'I'm a 'sorta' something, I'm a 'sorta' colour,  
 I'm a 'sorta' colour called ...'.
5. The starter student names a colour.
6. The class repeats the chant and then the next student must name another colour.
7. The chant continues with each student around the circle naming a different colour.
8. Students who can't think of a new colour begin a new category, for example:  
 'I'm a 'sorta' something, I'm a 'sorta' plant.  
 I'm a 'sorta' plant called ...'.

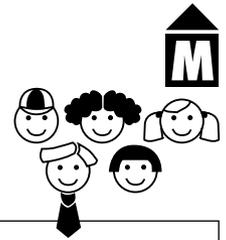
### Prompt

- ☛ Vary the starting category to suit the age and abilities of students involved.

### Second act

- ☛ For a competitive game, students who fail to name a new 'sorta something' are out.

## GOOD MORNING



### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Divide your class into two groups.
2. Have the two groups line up in single file facing each other, five to six metres apart.
3. Call out two related characters, for example:
  - ☛ cat and dog.
  - ☛ pirate and first mate
  - ☛ police officer and known felon
  - ☛ principal and student
  - ☛ skeleton and ghost
4. The first student in each line should approach each other as the characters you have nominated, say 'good morning' (again in character), and join the end of the opposite line.
5. Call out different characters for the next pair of students.

### Second act

- ☛ Extend the greeting into a conversation.
- ☛ Have students greet each other in a strange language (nonsense words), conveying meaning through tone rather than through the words.
- ☛ Add an emotional element such as the student's voice conveying concern, amusement or distress.



# POISON IVY



## You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

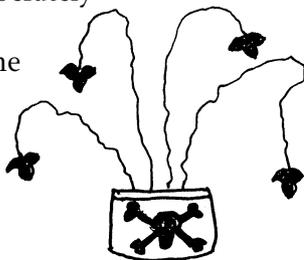
1. Define a safe, clear play area.
2. Choose one student to play a rescuer and another student to play the 'lost' child.
3. Instruct the rest of the class to find somewhere to sit in the play area.
4. Tell the class that they are poison ivy bushes. Their arms are branches which can move in the breeze, but they cannot move from their position.
5. Blindfold the lost child. Tell them it is late at night and they have wandered into a forest of poison ivy. If they touch a plant, or the plant touches them, they will be poisoned!
6. Instruct the rescuer to guide the lost child from one end of the poison ivy forest to the other, but they can only use verbal instructions.
7. The game is won if the lost child is safely guided to the other end. It is over if the lost child touches, or is touched by, the poison ivy.

## Prompt

- ☛ Ensure poison ivy bushes don't move around, or 'gang up' on the lost child by deliberately blocking the path.
- ☛ Remind students that only the rescuer can talk.

## Second act

- ☛ Have more than one rescuer calling instructions.
- ☛ Have one student deliberately call out misleading instructions at the same time as the rescuer is calling theirs.



# KIM'S GAME



## You need:

- ☛ tray
- ☛ some precious stones or a group of 20 small objects
- ☛ towel to cover the tray
- ☛ pencil
- ☛ piece of paper to write on

1. Explain that Kim was a young boy (in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*) who was being trained to work with gems and precious stones. This game was used to develop Kim's visual skills and memory.
2. Present the class with a tray of precious stones. If the drama budget doesn't stretch that far, use a tray of twenty small objects, for example a paper clip, pen, eraser, piece of wire or die.
3. Ask the class to observe the tray for two minutes.
4. Cover the tray and instruct students to write down the name of each object on the tray.

## Second act

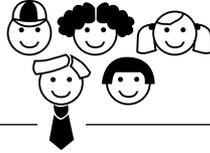
- ☛ Divide your class into teams to play this game. Have each team decide beforehand on the best strategy for this memory game.
- ☛ Increase the difficulty of the task by asking students to answer questions about the objects they have observed. For example 'What colour was the pen?', 'Which number was showing on the die?', or 'Which object was next to the chicken?'.
- ☛ Secretly remove three objects from the tray. Ask students to identify the missing objects.
- ☛ Increase the number of objects for older students.
- ☛ Show students the tray at the beginning of the lesson and have them describe its contents at the end of the lesson.

# WHAT IS MY JOB?



## You need:

- ☛ large, open play area



1. Divide your class into two even groups.
2. Define a safe play area.
3. Draw a performance line three or four metres from one end. Send **Group 1** to the very end of the play area behind the performance line.
4. Establish a safety zone for **Group 2** at the opposite end. Nominate an occupation for **Group 2** to mime.
5. **Group 2** moves to the performance line and chants, 'We've got a job, you've got none. If you guess it, watch us run!'.
6. **Group 2** then mimes the occupation, while **Group 1** calls out guesses.
7. As soon as **Group 1** has guessed correctly, they attempt to tag **Group 2**, who attempt to run back to the safety of their end. Tagged members join **Group 1** behind the performance line.
8. Repeat until only one student remains.

## Prompt

- ☛ Watch for rough play, members of **Group 1** who leave their end before the occupation is correctly guessed, and for **Group 2** members who leave the performance line early.

## Second act

- ☛ Change the mime from occupation to hobby, sport, animal ('We've got a pet, you've got none.'), or film or television program ('We've got a show, you've got none.').

# TOOL TIME



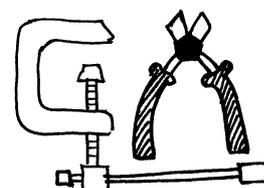
## You need:

- ☛ blackboard or whiteboard
- ☛ chalk or whiteboard marker

1. Ask students to find an individual space to work in.
2. Write the name of a tool on the board, for example:
  - ☛ tin-opener
  - ☛ clamp
  - ☛ electric drill
  - ☛ scissors
  - ☛ screwdriver
  - ☛ spanner
  - ☛ stapler
3. Discuss the parts of the tool, its movement and its sounds.
4. Students create the tool and its operation using body movement and sound.

## Second act

- ☛ Designate some adverse operating environments for the tools, for example a screwdriver attempting to remove a rusty screw, scissors cutting through card which is too thick, or a stapler attempting to staple 50 sheets of paper.
- ☛ Have students work in pairs to create the tools.
- ☛ Form groups of three or four students and create more complex appliances such as a fridge, a washing machine, a spin-dryer, an electric fan, a microwave oven, a lawnmower, a vacuum cleaner or a toaster.



# WHOSE TURN?



## You need:

- ☛ clear area

1. Tell students to stand in a tight circle, shoulders touching.
2. Ask them to look down at the floor and avoid eye contact.
3. Tell students they are going to count from one to 30 (whatever is the number of students in your class). Explain that each student can only call one number, but that there is no order in which students should call—any student may say the next number.
4. Choose a student to start and call 'one'. Continue until the target number is reached and all students have called a number.

## Prompt

- ☛ This is more difficult than it sounds—there will be some quite poignant silences along the way!

## Second act

- ☛ Count backwards or substitute letters for numbers.
- ☛ Allow students to call more than one number.



# PARTY PEOPLE



## You need:

- ☛ clear area

1. Ask one student to be the birthday person.
2. Choose four to five 'guests'.
3. Have each guest secretly choose an occupation such as an actress, a firefighter, farmer, rodeo rider, shop assistant or postal worker.
4. Tell guests to role-play each character and give their birthday greetings.
5. The birthday person must guess the occupation of each guest. Once they have guessed correctly, the guests sit down.
6. Choose a new birthday person and guests.

## Second act

- ☛ Have guests role-play famous people instead.
- ☛ Set a time limit for guessing the role of each guest.

# MAKE MIME A COFFEE



## You need:

- ☛ large card with an object name



1. Divide your class into groups of five or six students.
2. Have the groups stand in lines facing the back of the class.
3. Instruct the first student in each line to turn around and face you.
4. Hold up a card with an object written on it. Objects could be a pencil, saw, rock, sponge, spade, sticky tape or schoolbag.
5. Put the card away once these students have read it.
6. The first student taps the second student on the shoulder, indicating they should turn around.
7. The first student mimes the object to the second student.
8. When the second student is certain they recognise the mimed object, they tap the third student on the shoulder and mime the object to them. As this occurs, the first student sits down.
9. Allow each group to complete their mime.
10. Ask the last student in each line to describe what they think the object is. Compare their answers with those of the first students.

## Prompt

- ☛ Swap the starting person each time.

## Second act

- ☛ Play competitively, with the winner being the first group finished with a correctly identified object.
- ☛ Instead of miming objects, mime emotions, adjectives or verbs.
- ☛ Set a time limit for the mimes.

# MY CLUB



## You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

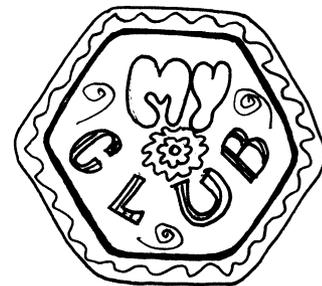
1. Sit the class in a circle.
2. Tell the class, 'I'm the president of a club. We only let some people join. Ask me a question and I'll tell you if you're allowed in.'
3. Students take it in turn to ask you a question. Any student beginning a question with the word 'Is', can join the club. All other students are informed that no, they are not allowed to join the club.
4. The game ends when a student correctly identifies the prerequisite. (For this game the prerequisite was that students needed to use the word 'Is' at the beginning of their question.)

## Prompt

- ☛ You may need to give hints as to the nature of the membership criteria.

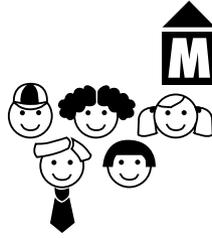
## Second act

- ☛ Choose more difficult prerequisites for older students, for example the number of words in their question, or the use of a word beginning with a particular letter.
- ☛ For younger students choose characteristics such as hair colour or clothing as prerequisites.
- ☛ Allow students in upper primary classes to take turns as the club president and choose criteria for membership.



## FINE LINE

(pronounced 'Feen-ay Len-ay' for reasons of rhyme)



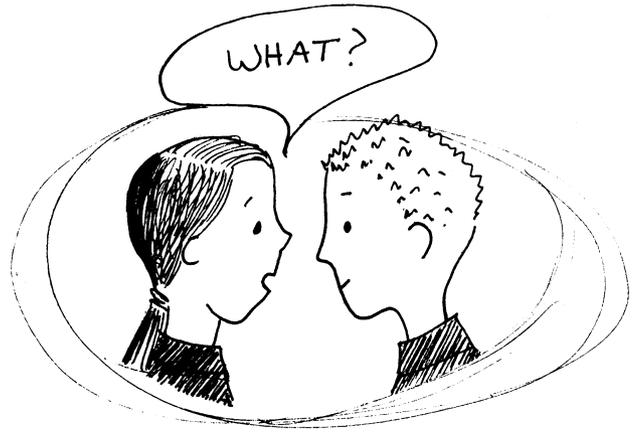
### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Form groups of six to eight students.
2. Have students line-up in order of height.
3. The group announces its completion by shouting 'fine' (pronounced 'feen-ay'— Italian for end or finish).
4. Repeat this game, but with different ordering criteria, for example:
  - ☛ reverse height order
  - ☛ age
  - ☛ alphabetically by given name, middle name or surname
  - ☛ shoe size
  - ☛ star sign

### Second act

- ☛ Have each group devise their own criterion. Encourage the remainder of the class to guess how the line was ordered.
- ☛ Appoint one student to be designated 'line manager'. Give the line manager a certain criterion for ordering their line. Ask them to put the members of their group in order, according to this, but no members of the group can talk. The line manager can ask questions, but these can be answered only with nods or shakes of the head.



## SAME LINE, DIFFERENT PLACE



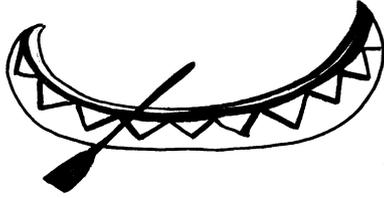
### You need:

- ☛ clear area

1. Divide students into pairs.
2. Designate one student A and the other B.
3. Allocate student A the line, 'But you have to!'.
4. Allocate student B the line, 'No way known!'.
5. Allow pairs two minutes to create a scene in which the two characters use these two lines (and ONLY these two lines!).
6. Perform for other students.

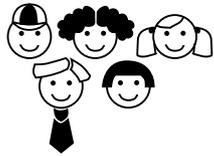
### Extra lines

- A:** 'What was that?' **B:** 'What was what?'
- A:** 'Excuse me but ...' **B:** 'Sorry, I'm too busy.'
- A:** 'Up in the sky!' **B:** 'Is it a plane?'
- A:** 'Time to go!' **B:** 'Not looking like that I hope!'
- A:** 'Please.' **B:** 'Please?'
- A:** 'Boo!' **B:** 'Arrghh!'
- A:** 'Now?' **B:** 'When did you think?'
- A:** 'Huh?' **B:** 'That's blown it!'



## TRANSPORTATION OF DELIGHT

**U**



### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area
- ☛ blackboard or whiteboard
- ☛ chalk or whiteboard marker

1. Form groups of six to eight students.
2. List unusual forms of transport on the board, for example:
 

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| ☛ chairlift      | ☛ gyroplane   |
| ☛ canoe          | ☛ skibob      |
| ☛ forklift truck | ☛ snowplough  |
| ☛ golf buggy     | ☛ steamroller |
| ☛ gondola        | ☛ tram        |
3. Each group selects a vehicle and has five minutes in which to create it. They can only use themselves as components. They are not allowed props, passengers or drivers.
4. Have groups recreate the vehicle. Ask the remainder of the class to guess the 'vehicle'.

### Second act

- ☛ Designate a driver. Have each group act out the progress of their vehicle, for example starting up, accelerating, moving/operating, slowing down and stopping.
- ☛ Create fantasy transport, for example flying carpets, witches' broomsticks or matter transporters (Star Trek).

## DAVE

**U**

### (Defining Adjectives Visually Exercise)

**G**

### You need:

- ☛ large, open play area

1. Form a large circle.
2. Choose a starter student.
3. Call out an adjective, for example:
 

|         |          |
|---------|----------|
| ☛ damp  | ☛ smooth |
| ☛ empty | ☛ sticky |
| ☛ heavy | ☛ tall   |
4. Ask the starter student to step into the circle, repeat the adjective, and either act out the word or use hands, movements or expressions to visually define the word.
5. This student returns to the circle.
6. The next student repeats the word and acts out or communicates the word in a different way.

### Prompt

- ☛ Allow less confident students the option of repeating the last visual definition.

### Second act

- ☛ Use more complex adjectives with older students such as delicate, polished, wrinkled, furious, spicy or eager.
- ☛ Use nouns or verbs instead of adjectives.
- ☛ Work around the circle in pairs. Ask the first student in each pair to repeat the word and communicate its visual definition. Next, have the second student in each pair say the antonym of this word and communicate its visual definition. Younger students may need the teacher to say both the word and its antonym.
- ☛ Older students can attempt a more difficult variation—using words that have a number of homonyms. Students must decide which meaning of the word they will act out. Some suggestions are hair/hare, rain/rein/reign, bear/bare and pain/pane.