

A World of Stories

**Written by Eleanor Crowder, adapted from *South & North, East & West*, published by Oxfam
Directed by Eleanor Crowder
Produced by Salamander Theatre for Young Audiences**

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Salamander Theatre for Young Audiences

Teacher Kit: A World of Stories

Welcome to Salamander Theatre's production of *A World of Stories*. We chose our favourite stories from Oxfam's book *South & North, East & West* to introduce you to story theatre. Just as the stories come from around the world, so do the performance styles. We hope that you can learn a song with us, laugh and wonder at the stories, and go on to make your own plays.

If this is the first time you've seen a play, we wish you every pleasure in the fun of watching actors bring each story alive. These are real people – as able to hear you as you can hear them. We ask you to help build the theatre magic by being an active audience. Let the actors know by your laughter and your listening that you are right there helping to make the story happen. Your attention makes the circle complete.

You will be sitting on the floor to watch the play. Get comfortable before we start, so that you and your friends around you can give all your attention to the stage. We wish you joy of our journey together through *A World of Stories*.

A World of Stories was created by Eleanor Crowder in January, 1994. Casts have included Tim Kohout, Afua Marcus, Eleanor Crowder; Marc Francoeur, Carole Belanger, Carrie Fisher-Coppola, Paul Lemelin; Nicky Brodie, Chris McLeod, Alix Sideris. Stage managers have been Martha Hancock, Kari Lynn Moore, Amy Cunningham.

The current cast for this show is:

David Hersh
Chris McLeod
Emmanuelle Zeesman

Stage management: Carrie Fisher-Coppola

Salamander Theatre for Young Audiences Teacher Kit: A World of Stories

Follow Up Activities

Songs

Stories

Scenario

Characterization

Drama Readiness

To the teacher:

These activities are developed for the teacher with little experience of drama who would like to use A World of Stories as a catalyst to work in their classroom. We're always delighted to know how activities work for you, or to offer you back-up sources or advice. We'd love to hear of other ways you build on our work. Please contact us at (613) 569-5629.

We hope that you enjoy the show,

Eleanor Crowder
Creator and director of A World of Stories
Former Artistic Director, Salamander Theatre

Songs

1. The songs in the play come from the oral tradition. We learned them by hearing other people sing them to us. If you remember the tune of the Papua New Guinean song, here are the words:

Na ki batla ho bona *sururu bele*
sururu bele
Na ki batla ho bona *sururu bele*
sururu bele

The meaning:
O who has seen *the flying ants*
the flying ants

The song is sung by children as they play. The list of things they see is onomatopoeic – the words sound like the things they describe. Here are the other animals in the story:

di koka bele	butterflies
di bolo bolo	chickens
phudu phudu	owls
tsiri tsiri	crickets
sego gwane	frogs
moru bisi	crane (a bird like a heron)
photo photo	little deer

If you remember the gestures, add them to the song. If you don't remember them, you can invent some of your own. (You can always telephone us to be reminded of the tune.)

2. If you were adding a song to the play to illustrate Canada, what song would you choose? How would you sing it to give children from other countries a feel for our land?
3. Can you sing na ki batla in English and add a list of Canadian animals? What gestures would you use to describe a wolf, a beaver, a bear? What language gave us the names of many native North American animals? (eg. Skunk, raccoon, moose) Do you have any songs in Algonkian or Mohawk? How would you find one to learn?
4. Learn the song "When I First Came to This Land". Use body gestures to make a physical picture for each verse. Divide the class into groups and paint a mural where each group illustrates one verse. Or make smaller pictures to bind into a class book of the song and add it to your classroom library.
5. Tour Canada in song! Learn a folk song from each province and territory and share them with your school in an assembly or year end picnic.

Stories

1. Which is YOUR favourite story? Why did you like it best?
2. How did the stories fit together? What things were told about all over the world? Were any of the characters like each other, even if the stories came from places very far apart?
3. What did you learn about each country from its story? List the details that make that place different from here, and use atlases, encyclopedias, geographic magazines and the knowledge of your friends to extend your list. Can you double it? Triple it?

Anansi and the Sky God	West Africa, and later, the Caribbean
Hare, Hippo and Elephant	East Africa (Kenya, Zimbabwe)
The Strongest Person in the World	Korea
The Hook	England
The Prince and Princess	Bangla Desh
Mansoor and the Donkey	Morocco
The Little Old Man	Cyprus

4. Do some of these stories remind you of other stories you already know? Make a classroom list of kinds of stories, and add to it during the term. You might record: Trickster stories, Heroic stories, Ghost stories, Love stories, Just desserts stories.
5. Another way to categorize stories is by the pattern of their telling. Some stories are narrative; others are sagas. Many are cyclical. Can you diagram the structure of each of the stories in the play?

Salamander Theatre for Young Audiences

Teacher Kit: A World of Stories

Scenario

To make a story into a play, you must understand its characters and its structure. Here are a series of exercises to apply to any story you might want to dramatize. (If your class has never worked together before in drama, you might like to try the drama readiness exercises first.)

A scenario can be built on paper or on your feet using the actor's bodies as your drawings. In the rehearsal hall, we often work straight on our feet. The solo work of drawing the scenario is part of the director's preparation for rehearsal. You can use it as a preparation for acting out a story, or as a way to frame a story before you write it down. Videographers do very similar work in making a story board before they shoot a story.

1. Cut yourself out a series of paper squares or rectangles. Or draw them on a sheet of paper.
 - a) Take one square (which we'll call a frame, like a cartoon) and draw the most exciting moment of the story. This is the CLIMAX, where everything changes and is never the same again.
 - b) Who are the characters at the climax? Take a frame for each and draw them in their most extreme condition (ie. Very scared, very pleased). What things make each character distinct? (like Anansi's web, Hare's ears). Draw those details.
 - c) Draw the ending frame. Where is each character now?
 - d) Draw the start of the story. Who do we see? What is the mood? How can you show the feel of that moment?

Now you have 3 plot drawings: beginning, middle and end, and drawings of each character. Older classes can add to their plot by drawing the Rising Action and Denouement (2 and 4 if your scenario becomes 5 frames).

2. Take your sequence of drawings and arrange them like a cartoon strip. Glue them to a larger sheet.
 - a) Add thought bubbles, or speech balloons for the most important character in each scene. Now, in a different colour pencil, add speech balloons for less important characters.
 - b) A variation: Cut out thought bubbles and speech balloons. Try the effect of different speeches on a partner. What's the most effective way of telling the story? Don't glue down your dialogue till you've found the clearest way to emphasize the action.
 - c) Another variation for junior classes: assign a group of 3 or 4 children to each frame of the scenario. Together they must develop the dialogue and thought bubbles. Cut out large bubbles. Use the students' bodies to make the picture, while they hold up their own speech or thought on paper. Other class members "edit" by subtracting the dialogue or adding it back till they have achieved the clearest choice.
3. Now use your bodies instead of paper to recreate the scenario process.
 - a) In groups of 3, 4 or 5, make a tableau (a group freeze to be seen from one side like a photograph) for the CLIMAX, the ENDING and the START.
 - b) Share the sequence of freezes from each group. Classmates can shut their eyes as the actors move to take the next freeze in a sequence on a count of 5.
 - c) Add the dialogue balloons. Replay the sequence 2 or 3 times to refine and edit in the group. Then share the sequence with dialogue.
 - d) Many stories require far more than 3 freezes. As actors work a story, they develop steps along the way. The scenario may have 15 distinct frames before it's finished. However, the process can be best understood with very few frames. Try Aesop's story of the Traveller who takes his cloak off for the sun and not the wind as a starting point.

SCENARIO BUILDING can be the first step to staging a play. It is also excellent practice in building narrative structure in writing.

Characterization

Most television and film use realistic characters – people who are variations on people. Theatre, and in particular Mime, allows us to play any character – animal, alien, monstrous or miniscule.

1. List the ways the actors became different characters in the play.
2. Choose a character in a story whom you'd like to portray.
 - a) What's special about that character?
 - b) What makes that character different from you physically?
 - c) How can you let your body echo that difference?
 - d) How can you change your voice to underline that character's particular flavour?
 - e) Using your own space, practice each of these elements of your character at the moment of CLIMAX (the most exciting/scary/amazing moment of your story).
3. Let characters from one story meet characters from another. Your text – take one character on the adventure which belongs to the other one. How would they react?
4. How would you make a puppet for your character? How big should it be? What bits of it must move?
5. In groups, choose a story and build puppets to tell your story? Junior classes: your puppets must be made of only one material. How do you animate Styrofoam trays, scrap wood, cloth strips to make a character?

Drama Readiness

You can use these exercises for both primary and junior students. You will need enough space for everyone to stand up and reach their arms around them. Gyms tend to be associated with running fast and usually have very bad acoustics – they're not easy places to concentrate for drama. A carpeted open library space is great. Your classroom with the desks pushed back can give you enough space. The “Own Space” exercise can be done between desks provided that everyone is careful.

A. Your Own Space

Drama work starts from using your body to express a story. The first step is to use your body in a very controlled way, where you have room to explore and so does everyone else in the classroom. Finding “your own space” is an exercise to return to at the start of every drama session.

1. On a count of 5, everyone stands and finds enough room to move their arms in a circle around them without bumping. Use this moment for a safety check: where are there sharp corners or odd shapes to be aware of when we start to move?
2. FREEZE! Use a hand clap, or a drum, or 2 sticks. The signal needs to be sharp and loud. Practice moving your body in the space and freezing 2 or 3 times until everyone in the room can hold a freeze. A freeze is instant and total – not even eyelids flutter. Move around the frozen statues: no one's eyes should follow you, no one should wobble.
3. Another count of 5 – find a new place in the room. On 5, check it out: how much room do you have? Where are the danger points? Is this as much space to work in as the first time you took your own space?
4. Repeat the exercise. Vary the count – 10 to find your own space; 2 to find a new space. The goal is for everyone to find a space they can work in every time. We are working to respect each other's boundaries and to share the space.
5. NB This whole exercise is done silently at first. When the class is really good at hearing the freeze signal, then add the complication of singing or whistling as you move and still hearing the signal to freeze.

B. Geometry

Once the class is good at finding their own space (and playing freeze games at any time of day!), move on to Geometry. Here the goal is to continue to give working room (ie. space) to everyone as they move through the room with specific goals in mind.

1. Everyone starts in their own space. Start with GEARS: call a speed and allow it to work awhile, then freeze. A different speed. Freeze. A different speed. Your choices: move/regular speed; slow motion; fast forward; $\frac{1}{2}$ the pace of slow-mo, and $\frac{1}{2}$ slow motion, slow motion, regular pace, jog, slow run, run. For now they happen on the spot, in your space.
2. Now the Gears start to travel – Each person walks in a straight, predictable line across the room, turning only at the wall. Everyone moves, taking their space with them, adjusting to their rate to accommodate each other, but maintaining their line of movement, and as much as they can, the pace set by the teacher. Use a freeze to keep everyone in control. On the freeze, allow eyes only to rove the room to see if there are empty spots, more ways to share the space.
3. When everyone can do that at a walk, add GEAR CHANGES on the freezes.
4. When everyone can do that at all gears, add groupings to the freezes:
 - a) When that works well (groups, pairs, at slow and fast counts), add a challenge to the group: in a count of 6, make a group of 3, and make a star.
 - b) Everyone jogs. Freeze. On a count of 10 find the nearest people to you and make a group of 5. Freeze. (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) Great. Now back to your own space. Slow-mo jog.
5. Take time to let each group hold their freeze of the ‘star’ and for everyone else to see it. There will be several solutions to every challenge (it can become a moving thing eventually; but always start with a statue).

The effect of Geometry is to build a climate of solo responsibility for body and voice control in a group used to working co-operatively in all variations of team. Only when a child is ready to let his/her body and voice work within a set boundary can you achieve the concentration necessary to start drama work.

Own Space and Geometry work very well introduced sequentially over several days, as additional steps in building skill required for drama.

