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## Joining in the Learning

The goals of games and drama are sometimes closely related. Both games and drama involve rules, fun, and learning; they require intervention, co-operation, and concentration; they ask students to participate naturally in something they enjoy doing. This chapter explores moving from games into drama.

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### Games in the Context of Drama

Drama games that provide students with opportunities to role-play in social situations and to explore unfamiliar relationships give students a means of practising on their own, and within their own social contexts, patterns that will be important in their adult lives. They formalize human interaction processes. As in drama, the players are constantly reversing roles — chasing or being chased, leading or following, shouting or listening — all of which promotes understanding of social actions and counteractions.

Games and activities that generate movement, co-operation, and participation can be used in all aspects of drama learning.

- Sometimes, games work as physical warmups before the actual drama begins. A game that promotes teamwork can model how the main drama event will be organized.
- Sometimes, games can be used near the end of a class to change the atmosphere, or to help everyone relax before the next class. An activity in which students reflect in pairs on the meanings accrued during a very physical and energetic drama event can redirect the talk and focus the class before dismissal.
- At other times, games can be used within the drama lesson for a specific purpose, such as determining or understanding the conflict at the heart of the drama situation.
- A game can lead to a dramatic exploration, where students extend the activity into an improvised event. For example, the words of a game can become the chant the players adopt as they return to the deliberations at the centre of the drama. The students might deepen drama work by enacting a dance ritual, distancing the conflict within the improvisation through another mode of experience. They can chant while sitting in a circle, with the sound getting louder as the hunter nears the hunted. They can drum on the floor to accompany the movements or shake rattles or tambourines. They can wear masks or makeup, or you can change the lighting or use the sound created by a metal sheet to indicate thunder and lightning.

On the next page is an outline of one dramatic game, *Dead One, Arise!* The appendix outlines several more games and activities. We hope that playing any

of the games we outline will enable students to actively engage in co-operative activities that support the drama events that follow.

### ***Dead One, Arise!***

We have used this game with all ages because it holds all the elements of the drama experience in its frame — tension, excitement, surprise, and full participation. Variations of the game are found in Sicily, Czechoslovakia, and Germany.

1. Ask the players to identify different reasons for going to a graveyard, for example, power. The ring on the dead one's hand is powerful; if they remove it, they will then have power.
2. Choose one person to lie on the ground and be covered with a blanket, sheet, or pile of jackets. The rest of the participants walk round the body, calling solemnly, "Dead One, arise! Dead One, arise! Dead One, arise!" No one can touch the body, and everyone pretends not to look at it. Then, when least expected, the "dead" person answers the call. He or she rushes at those who have been calling out and tries to touch someone.
3. When someone is caught, he or she joins the "dead" body. The game continues until everyone is part of the dead body. Options include adding music and performing the game in slow motion. The game can be repeated with drumming added while the players chant, "Dead One, arise!"

**Alternative — Grandmother's Footsteps:** Here is another version of the game. Suspense, the challenge of keeping the body in control, the excitement of figuring out tactics to succeed, and the fun of taking calculated risks all contribute to the game's popularity. You can watch the game in action on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

1. One person volunteers to be Grandmother, or It. He or she stands, with back to the players, at one end of the playing space.
2. Have the other players form a line at the opposite end of the playing space, facing Grandmother's back.
3. The players try to creep up on Grandmother but must freeze if he/she turns. Grandmother can turn whenever she/he feels like it, and anyone caught moving must return to the starting line and begin again.
4. The player who successfully reaches and touches Grandmother wins and becomes the next Grandmother.

#### **Touch of Power**

In introducing a drama about ordinary folk contending with a powerful authority figure, the class might play this game with the word *grandmother* replaced by *sorceress* or *king*. The players try to touch this figure and thereby become the leader.

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## **Dramatic Rituals**

Rituals are often believed to have special power, and the way in which the ritual is performed takes on great symbolic significance. Ancient rituals brought individuals together so that all thoughts and energies would be focused on one activity. Everyone behaved in the same way and worked towards the same goal. The group experience took over, and an understanding that was shared by all was created. Through ritual, the knowledge and beliefs of the society were passed on to future generations.

Ritual is very important to drama. Indeed, early rituals were the beginning of formal theatre. The duties of the priest and other participants in the ritual gradually became roles taken on by actors; the other members of the group went from being worshippers to audience members. The forms of past rituals offer

students involved in drama a way of adding power to their work, focusing the improvised playing with a careful structure that can add solemnity or choreographed movement to the event being explored. Games often retain elements of older rituals.

You can create your own rituals with the students and use these as part of a drama you are creating, or as the beginning or ending of your drama. In a drama about fishers lost at sea, for example, there might be this ritual: the whole village stands at the dock, and one by one, each family member tosses an object owned by a lost sailor into the ocean. Often, the drama lesson resembles ritual, where participants co-operate with each other, address a single focus, and strive for an emotional joining-in of all involved. Of course, this work is not incorporating authentic rituals because students are role-playing the events and believing as actors.

### ***Capturing the Bear — from game to ritual***

In the past, people would celebrate an event by replaying it through an art form as thanks to the higher spirits who guided them, in tribute to any who lost their lives during the event, or even as a prediction of a successful experience next time. Although the origin of the ritual has likely been lost, as in many children's games, the remaining pieces form a kind of ritual that embodies the spirit of the original experience. In the following game, you will find remnants of past events with hunters and prey, and through drama, students can create their own context for the hunt.

1. Invite everyone to sit on chairs in a large circle. The greater the diameter of the circle, the greater fun the game will be. The success of the game depends on total silence and stillness from the onlookers.
2. Select two people, one as the Hunter and the other as the Bear. Two helpers blindfold both and take them to opposite sides of the circle. They turn each player around three times. The helpers then return to their places.
3. The game begins when there is complete quiet, and (to build up the feeling of ceremony), a leader says, "Night has fallen." The Hunter and the Bear then begin to move. The Hunter should be encouraged to listen for the whereabouts of the Bear so that the Bear can be more easily caught. Both players must keep moving, and the rest of the group must steer the players gently back into the circle if they move towards the edges. To add to the ritual, the Bear could be made to wear a bell. The "bear," when captured, can choose the next player.
4. *Building the Drama:* This game can be turned into a dramatic ritual by using some of the following questions to determine the aspects of the hunt that will remain in the created ritual developed by the class. Elements of past rituals may emerge in answer to the questions, and new ritualistic moments can be created through the decisions taken by the class. As the work develops, the dramatic aspects will become more complex; eventually, a scenario is constructed and it becomes a theatrical event.

#### **Questioning**

- Will the Bear be represented by a single person, a pair, or a small group?
- How will the Bear move? What will it sound like?
- How will the Hunter be portrayed?
- What are some other roles that the participants could take?
- Will there be standing? crouching? leaping? prowling?
- Will there be dancing?

- Will class members imitate the Bear's actions?
  - How will the space be used? Will you call for a circle or line?
  - How will the Hunter(s) approach the Bear? close in on the Bear? capture the Bear?
  - Will you use a drum or any other instrument to beat a rhythm?
  - Will any props, costumes, or makeup be used to enhance the ritual?
  - Can you create masks for the ritual?
  - How can students create the fierceness and bravery of the Hunter?
  - What nonverbal sounds will they use? grunts? growls? moans? humming?
  - Will there be any words?
  - Will there be places of silence? time to rest?
  - Will the ritual include the killing of the Bear? If so, how will it be handled?
  - Will there be some group work that will then be made part of the whole class's presentation of the ritual?
  - How will the class end the ritual? Quietly? With a shout? Fading out? Building up? With music or chant?
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