

Drama Workshop Plan: ages 11-16yrs (approx. 1 hour 30 mins)

The following workshop is a structure that can be added to, elaborated upon, and words changed according to the needs and understanding of your group and which particular elements evoke interest and discussion among the children. It is important to pause after each section of the workshop for a group discussion to illicit the children's ideas about the themes of slavery, such as being told what to do without reward, power and control.

Each section has directions, explanations, possible wording and ideal timings. Those in italics are for group leaders to think about themselves. It is written as an aid to leaders who may not have used drama as an educational tool before, therefore some sections may seem more detailed to those that do use drama already.

Resources: A ball of wool, large sheets of plain paper. Colouring pens. Large sheets of paper with the words 'Slave' 'Slave owner' and 'bystander' written in large letters.

A prepared biography of a slave or a slave owner or a bystander, or all three, of your own creation so that you are ready to answer question in role during hot seating. (You can decide whether to take example from Jewish history, slaves in Egypt/Joseph, or to research a modern day situation (You can read other René Cassin resources to find modern day case studies).

A chair. A scarf or hat to denote when the teacher is in role during 'hot seating'.

Introduction: (in a circle)

Leader Questions: We are going to be thinking about slavery. Who knows what slavery is? What do you understand by the term slavery?

Rene Cassin definition: 'Slavery: being forced to work without pay, under the threat of violence and being unable to walk away.'

You can choose whether or not to read the above definition to the children or to use your own words, or better still a combination of what you discover from the children in your group.

We will be using games and drama to think about slavery, but because we will be working and thinking together we need to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable.

Group Contract: Stand in a circle and hold hands. The leader sends a 'pulse' around the group (squeeze of the hand next to you and then that person squeezes the hand next to them and so on until it gets back to the leader) making the following statements. 'We will look after ourselves!' (one pulse) 'We will look after everyone else!' (another pulse) and 'We will look after the space!' (another pulse).

(5mins)

Warm up

(Warm ups are important as they get the body ready and alert and also awaken the imagination.)

Colour touch: Begin to walk around the room, careful not to touch one another when you pass each other. Speed up, slow down, how slow can you go? Now touch the following colours (Blue, red, yellow, green etc.). Remind the children that as they are touching each other to be very careful.

Connections: Ask the children to stand in a circle. Holding the ball of wool make a statement, something like... 'I like chocolate'. Then pass the ball of wool to others who agree with your statement, making sure to hold the end of it. As the wool gets passed around, each child who agrees with the statement should hold a part of the wool. Then the last child to whom the wool gets passed makes another statement etc. until there is a web of wool connecting all the children. Note out loud for the children all the connections that they have.

Carefully place the web of wool onto the floor in one area of the room to be a symbol of how the children are linked by commonalities. We will be returning to the web at the end of the session.

(15 mins)

Bridge to the topic: Leader to spread the sheets with the words 'slave' 'slave owner' and 'bystander' around the room. Next to those pieces of paper lay out a large sheet of paper and some colouring pens. Divide the group into three and name them 'A' 'B' and 'C'.

Ask group 'A' to go to the part of the room labelled 'slave', 'B' to go to the area labelled 'slave owner' and 'C' to go to the area labelled 'bystander'.

Each group will create a still sculpt of that 'character' (like a statue). Encourage the children to think about how they may hold their body in that role. i.e. a slave may feel tired, defeated, angry. A slave owner may feel powerful, uncaring. A bystander to the situation of slave and slave owner may feel horrified, scared, hopeless etc. How would they show that in their bodies?

When they have held the statue for a few seconds, encourage them to write / draw on the big sheet of paper any feelings or thoughts that they had whilst in their statue.

Now the groups will move around to the next area and repeat the process, until all areas have been visited by all groups.

When the exercise is finished, encourage the children to go and visit the big sheets of paper and read and look at what others have written or drawn.

(30 mins)

Group Discussion:

Leader Questions: What did you notice when you went to look at the sheets? Were people writing the same kind of thing as you? Were there any surprises? What were some of your thoughts and feelings? What were some of the issues highlighted? *Help the children think about issues of control, power, status and the role of the bystander.*

Hot Seating:

This is a drama exercise where one person in role sits on a chair in front of an audience. The audience then has the opportunity to ask the character any question that they want to. The aim of this exercise is to try and learn as much as one can about the life, thoughts, hopes and disappointments of this character. The 'teacher in role' will not have to prepare too much as long as they stay in character whilst sitting on the chair. Then answers to questions from the children can provoke authentic improvised responses from the character.

It is important that the group leader takes on the roles of slave, slave owner or bystander so that the children don't embody any of the roles too much as some difficult and complicated feeling may arise from being in this role. Additionally, the children need to have the opportunity to ask questions.

It may be helpful to have a prop or a piece of costume to help you stay in role. Also think about how that person might sit. What their attitude is to the questions and the people asking them. It is also important to make sure that when you are not on the chair that you de-role completely so as not to confuse the children. It may be helpful to have two leaders, one to be in role and one to manage the questioning. Alternatively, choose one of the children to be in charge of the questioning so that not everyone is talking at the same time.

(30 mins)

Reflection:

Ask the children to return to the groups they were in when thinking about the different roles. Ask them to think together, having heard the stories of the characters, about a message that they would want to give the characters should they meet them again.



(10 mins)

Ending:

Create a large circle again. Recap on the events of the workshop. Give time and space for children to voice their messages to the characters. Ask what people are left thinking about now at the end of the workshop. Think about how the thoughts and feelings evoked by the workshop are relevant to millions of people today, and how slavery is not, unfortunately, a thing of the past.

Return to web of wool and ask the group to pick it up again carefully. Remind the group that we are all connected still, and that we are equals.

Written by Susanna Kester (Rosenberg)

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