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Gargoyles

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The teacher's intended outcomes were for the students to:

- create dramatic space by positioning bodies meaningfully
- critically observe a teacher in role and identify the techniques and elements she uses.

The students had done considerable drama work prior to this hour-long session. They had been reading *The Night of the Gargoyles* by Eve Bunting, which the teacher used as a pretext for a process drama about what people do when they are scared.

The teacher introduced a story about gargoyles, and talked about her visit to England, where she saw them on buildings. The students discussed what gargoyles are and what purpose they might serve.

In role as a nightwatchman, the teacher asked them to interpret the techniques she used to show she was very nervous and frightened about guarding the building at night.

She questioned them closely about her role and invited them one at a time to interact with her while the others interpreted the scene. She asked questions that required them to think about wider possibilities for the drama and to tie it into the gargoyle story.

They were then split into two groups. One group prepared the role of the nightwatchman, who wants to get transferred because he is scared of the gargoyles, but won't admit it. The other group played the role of his boss, and were told that under no circumstances were they to let the nightwatchman change jobs.

Two students took the roles and responded only with movement and gesture while the others provided the dialogue. The students were asked to reflect on how the interview worked. The teacher then read the story.

In small groups they prepared frozen images of the gargoyles. The teacher questioned their choices in using the space to create their images. They added a line each to their frozen image and the teacher entered in role as the nightwatchman, adding a narration to the action.

Teacher-student conversations

Teacher: What did the nightwatchman do with his voice and with his body that told you how he felt?

Simon: He went silent.

Teacher: He went silent. And what about his face and his body, what did he do?

Jane: He looked away.

Teacher: I wonder why he doesn't tell anyone how he feels?

WHERE TO NEXT?

One of the students in the freeze frames suggests that the gargoyles won't frighten the nightwatchman if he helps them. The teacher might then structure the drama where, in role as the nightwatchman, she meets the gargoyles to find out what help they needed. The needs of the gargoyles could be investigated, as could the response of the nightwatchman.

CURRICULUM LINKS

The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum

Achievement Objectives

Developing Practical Knowledge in Drama (PK)

Students will use elements and techniques of drama to explore dramatic conventions.

Developing Ideas in Drama (DI)

Students will initiate and develop ideas with others and improvise drama in a range of situations.

Communicating and Interpreting in Drama (CI)

Students will present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements of drama combine with ideas to create meaning.

The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum, page 38 and 39
www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/curriculum/statement/pg38_39_e.php

REFERENCES

Bunting, Eve, and Wiesner, David (illustrator) (1999). *The Night of the Gargoyles*. Boston: Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin.

Ministry of Education (2000). *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: The students rehearsed and sustained roles in a process drama where the teacher was also in role.



Clip 1

The teacher explains the context for the lesson, and asks questions about the topic.



Clip 2



Clip 3

Progress Indicator

Responding to Drama

Observes elements, techniques, and conventions in order to identify strengths and weaknesses (C1)

The students interpret the teacher in role, noting how she is feeling by reading her gesture, her voice and movement, and noting the use of contrast to portray nervousness. The students begin to think of the possibilities for further action in the drama by suggesting it's the shadows of the gargoyles which might frighten the nightwatchman.



Clip 4



Clip 5



Clip 6



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Clip 7

Progress Indicator

Working in Role

Creates and develops a role for a specific situation (DI)

The students develop their ideas on how to play the nightwatchman's boss. Michael reflects on how he focused on Natasha to sustain his work in role.



Clip 8

Progress Indicator

Working in Role

Enacts and responds within a role (PK)

Michael responds to the dialogue provided by the students with appropriate gesture and movement.



Clip 9

Progress Indicator

Working in Role

Sustains in role an intended atmosphere or emotion (CI)

Michael reflects on how he focused on Natasha to sustain his work in role.



Clip 10

Progress Indicator

Creating Dramatic Space

Shapes dramatic space by positioning or moving bodies and objects meaningfully within it (PK, CI, DI)

The students use the information from their previous work and the story to create the gargoyles. Attention is given to frozen images, which use both horizontal and vertical space. The tension is enhanced by the teacher narration and the use of vocal techniques which are threatening.