

Top ten values for process drama

From 'The benefits of drama for literacy' a Keynote address by Viv Aitken
At *Success for all* Tai Tokerau Literacy Assoc Seminar day. May 2017

Imagined worlds	Process drama allows the opportunity for experiences not only in the real world of the classroom but also in at least one imagined world set up by the drama.	"The world of reality has its limits, the world of the imagination is boundless" - Jean Jacques Rousseau date unknown
Safety	Working and learning in imagined worlds, offers a safe space for the learner to take risks.	"there is a 'no penalty' awareness felt by the doer, a sense of freeing the individual, so that they may find themselves 'caught off guard' into identifying skills they did not know they had, into seeing some aspect of themselves in a different light, into revising the way they habitually think about themselves" - Gavin Bolton 2003
Metaxis	Participants moving between the real and imagined worlds retain a dual awareness of both. They can transfer learning between the worlds and 'look on' with a meta-awareness at their progress.	"When we were asked to create personas to work within the [drama] I felt this gave me the freedom to explore different realities in pursuit of the goal of the group. I liked being able to define a new role and learn within that" – Anonymous university student, 2014
Repositioning	Process drama allows teachers to shift the way power is operating in the classroom, especially through teaching in role.	"One of the core reasons why as a teacher I use drama is because when we create an imagined world, we can imagine that we frame events differently so that our power and authority relationships are changed. A long-term aim of mine as a teacher is as much as possible to share power and authority with students. I want students to have more opportunities to use words and deeds to act appropriately but in ways that are often not sanctioned in classrooms." – Brian Edmiston 2003

Authenticity	Process drama allows participants to explore real world issues in the classroom in ways that can make them seem realistic and important even while we know they are imagined.	“It’s real in all the ways that matter” - Year 4 student TLRI project <i>Connecting Curriculum, Connecting Learning</i>
Integration	Process drama, and particularly the complex form of this known as ‘Mantle of the Expert’ is naturally integrative... It provides a context for exploring curriculum in an unforced and engaging way.	“We wouldn’t survive in the desert without Maths and literacy and stuff.” Primary school child – UK Mantle of the Expert website. “You’ve actually got us doing Maths, here haven’t you? ... sneaky!”- yr 6 student during a Mantle of the Expert experience
Purposeful learning	Learners engaged in process drama and Mantle of the Expert report a stronger sense of intrinsic purpose to their learning.	“I don’t think it’s about [the NCEA] credits – definitely not about credits” – secondary school student reflecting on a six week process drama experience – Anonymous high school student quoted in Gaenor Stoate’s M.Ed thesis, Waikato University 2013.
Audience	While process drama is usually not focussed on generating performance for an audience, the interaction with teacher in role and others from the imagined world, can add a sense of ‘audience’ to the work – this is beneficial for writing or other shared work-in-progress.	“I found that during board meetings and proposals I was very much in role working for my client to play my part and make a difference.” University student on working in Mantle of the Expert
Emotional engagement	One of the most compelling things about process drama is how it can engage and captivate learners and linger on in the memory. This can be attributed to the emotional engagement and sense of empathy involved.	“It’s been known for a long time even through studies in neuroscience that salience – not just paying attention – but something feeling emotionally important – something being a prominent feature in your thinking – plays an important part in your capacity to learn and retain information and remember it at a later date.” - Dan Haesler Teacher education review blog, podcast 2016

Alignments with play	Process drama has strong alignments with children’s sociodramatic & pretend play, which is how young children make sense of the world. Process drama is particularly age appropriate for children and involves the complex thinking and problem solving used in play. It also works for older people who used to be children!	“Between eighteen and twenty-four months, children begin to separate the contents of other people’s minds from their own beliefs. They show that ability off in a deceptively simple feat: pretending. When a toddler plays along with his mother who tells him the phone is ringing and hands him a banana, he is separating the contents of their pretense (the banana is a telephone) from the contents of his own belief (the banana is a banana).” – Steven Pinker <i>How the Mind works</i> 1997
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