



UNIT 1

Drama Exploration

■ Dislocation 1 – *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan

In this section your workshops will cover:

- **Explorative strategies:** Still image, role play, hot seating, forum theatre, narration, marking the moment, conscience alley
- **Drama medium:** Space and levels, spoken language, voice, movement, mime and gesture
- **Elements of drama:** Action, plot and form.

In your GCSE course, you will take part in practical sessions that use as a starting point different drama texts and link them through a connecting theme. In the following workshops you are going to explore the idea of dislocation by looking at an image from the book *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan.

Activity 1

This piece of work uses an image as the starting point. You will be working in pairs to create a **still image** – a visual representation of a scene without movement. This is an **explorative strategy**.

With a partner, look closely at the picture opposite of the couple at the table.

1 Discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think the artist included the items you can see in the picture?
- What do you think this picture tells us about the relationship between the two people?

Set

The type of set will reflect the style of performance. If it is a non-naturalistic performance the set might be minimal or even non-existent. If the style of performance is naturalistic then the set will be as realistic as possible. If a set isn't realistic then either the performance is not naturalistic or the set designer is not very good.



▲ 'Less is more' is a central principle of non-naturalistic design. As in this set for Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, non-naturalistic set design often works with ideas, themes and moods.

Activity 25

Draw a diagram or illustration to represent the set of the performance. Describe the part of the set you have drawn. Add notes explaining how the actors used the various parts of the set and whether the set was successful in helping the actors perform effectively to the audience.

► Chekhov's plays are about certain types of people who lived in late nineteenth-century Russia. Most modern productions keep this period setting, with costume making a distinctive contribution not just to their historical accuracy but to their mood and tone, as in this version of *The Seagull* by the Royal Shakespeare Company.



Costume

Costumes can be used to indicate character. In a naturalistic performance the costumes will be faithful to the time and place of the action. For example, in a Victorian setting, characters would wear authentic-looking clothes.

If the performance is non-naturalistic then a suggestion of what the character might wear is usually sufficient. For example, a hat, scarf or coat can signify a change of role.

Activity 26

Draw some illustrations of the costumes worn in the performance. Add notes describing how these costumes signified **character** and how well they worked in the performance. Were the costumes successful? If so, explain why they were successful. If not, explain why they were not successful. Make sure your reasons are clear.

Lighting

Good lighting enhances a production, poor lighting swamps a performance. Lighting helps to create mood and atmosphere on the stage. Sometimes the stage lighting can create subtle effects and help the audience 'read' what is happening. For example, during the opening **mime** in *Missing Dan Nolan* a blue light is used to signify moonlight (see Activity 16 in Part 1 of this unit, page 43). Using blue light in this way in a naturalistic performance would not be appropriate, because you do not see blue light at night in real life.



▲ Paule Constable has won awards internationally for her lighting design. Her use here of reflected light gives a haunting intimacy to this scene from the Cottesloe Theatre production of *Some Trace of Her*.

Activity 27

Record your thoughts about the lighting in the performance. Make sure you give examples to support your judgements. For example, a special spot might be used to isolate a character in a scene, by darkening the surrounding set and actors. The audience will probably 'read' this as the spotlighted character being the focus of the scene. Why might this be?

Sound

As with stage lighting, good use of sound can enhance the action whereas poor sound can ruin a performance. On pages

Activity 59

Now that you have tried out Extract 1 from *Teechers* in the five different staging styles, have a go at staging the other extracts in the five styles. Alternatively, each group in your class can take one of the extracts and stage it in one of the five styles. In this way you can compare and contrast the effectiveness of the styles.

As you watch each extract being performed, ask yourself these questions from the audience's point of view and feed back to the performing group:

Questions for the audience



- Can we see everything?
- Can we hear everything?
- Is it clear where the action is taking place?
- Do we know who is who?
- Do we know what is happening?
- Do we feel the actors are communicating and connecting with us?

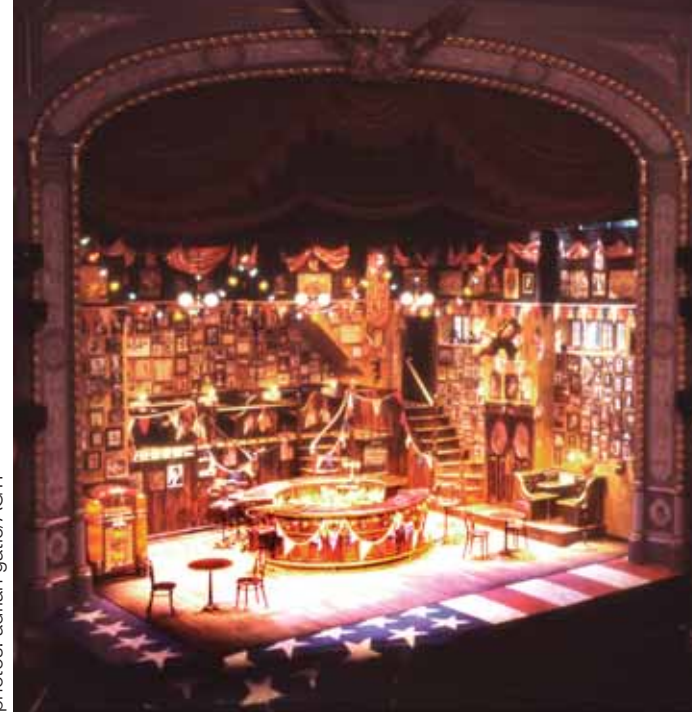
If the answer to any of these questions is 'no' then as a group you need to explore alternatives that will make the staging work for you.

Upstage Right USR	Upstage Centre USC	Upstage Left USL
Centre Stage Right CSR	Centre Stage CS	Centre Stage Left CSL
Downstage Right DSR	Downstage Centre DSC	Downstage Left DSL
A U D I E N C E		

How do you describe where you are on the stage?

The standard method is to describe positions from the point of view of the performer, standing on the stage and looking at the audience. The plan (left) shows the terms used.

photos: adrian gatie/AGTP



These two photos show how the set designer Jan Bee Brown arranged the staging of *Conversations With My Father* for two completely different theatres: the Old Vic in London (top), which at that time had a traditional proscenium stage, and the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough (bottom), which is purpose built for theatre in-the-round.

Notice how the original architecture of the Old Vic has put an ornate frame around the 'picture' that the audience sees. This is a feature of many older theatres. In modern proscenium theatres, the framing of the stage tends to be much less obvious.



Exam tips



Be certain that the staging you intend to use:

- will create an interesting performance
- will be appropriate for the drama being performed
- is practical for the circumstances of your school.

▶ Sound cue sheet for use with a mixer desk

Cue	PC		CD		Mini Disc		Master
	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	
4	0	0	0	0	7	7	10
5	0	0	8	8	0	0	10
6	8	8	0	0	0	0	10
7	8	8	0	0	0	0	3
8	8	8	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	5	5	0	0	10
10	10	10	0	0	0	0	7



▶ A portable sound mixer desk

One final point to remember

Often when you see a performance in the theatre, there will be highly professional lighting, excellent use of sound, well-made costumes and make-up that enhances the acting, all on a stage that has a versatile and appropriate set for the production. This is called having high **production values**. If you are offering production support, always aim to have high production values to make sure that your actors are given the best possible support.

Keeping a Working Notebook

You can keep materials in your Working Notebook throughout your GCSE course. These will help you with your learning about drama. The Working Notebook will also provide you with material that you can use to construct your **documentary response** during your assessed sessions.

- Your Working Notebook can be a hardback book, a folder, a ring binder or something similar that can be used during each lesson and also taken home.
- Use your Working Notebook to record your responses to the lessons and your thoughts about the drama you create.
- Your Working Notebook should form a link between one lesson and the next. It should help you to remember the activities you have completed and the moments of drama that you have created.
- Write directly into your Working Notebook and also paste materials into it.
- Include images, drawings and illustrations.
- Always include reference to the **explorative strategies**, the **drama medium** and the **elements of drama** when appropriate.
- Your Working Notebook should build evidence of your skills development and should also be a record of the work you have covered.
- Remember to use the EDE structure below. Always explain as well as describing.

Example – Describe – Explain

In English you might have been taught how to use the acronym PEE in your essays. This means Point – Example – Explain. When compiling your Working Notebook you need to use a different acronym: **EDE**. This means Example – Describe – Explain.

➔ EDE: Example – Describe – Explain

Example: Take as your starting point an example of what you did, such as compiling a **still image** to explore a picture or issue. For this example, say briefly what the image is.

Describe: Once you have introduced the example you need to describe it. For a still image, you would describe what the image looked like and how it reflected the outcomes of your discussion, perhaps focusing on the relationship between two people in the image.

Explain: After describing the example of an image, you would need to explain in drama terms how the image worked for someone looking at it and 'reading' it. For example, you might explain how the space between the two people was significant, how the eye contact or lack of it indicated an emotion, how the hand contact signified their connection with each other. You also need to link your explanation with the language of drama that you have been learning. These links should include the explorative strategies, the drama medium and the elements of drama.

In the following set of examples you will see how EDE has been applied – or not!

Example A

Look at these two examples of students' work taken from their Working Notebooks. Both extracts describe work they did at the beginning of the Dislocation workshops in Unit 1, Part 1, pages 11–16.

“ Extract A1

Example: In order to explore the picture from *The Arrival* fully using explorative strategies, we began by creating a still image in which we attempted to capture the essence and the mood of the picture.

Describe: My partner and I discussed the relationship between the two people – we decided they are man and wife – and we discussed what the artist had included in the picture to give us some clues about what is

happening. We decided that one of them is planning to leave and they do not know how long they will be apart.

The mood is sad and we tried to capture this mood using the drama medium of space and levels to indicate the strong relationship and the sadness of the two people as they prepare to say goodbye. This can be seen in the image below.



Explain: There is strong eye contact between them – no words are needed as they approach the moment of