

How To: Use Dramatic Enactments

DQ2: HELPING STUDENTS EFFECTIVELY INTERACT WITH NEW KNOWLEDGE

Element 12

Strategies for Helping Students Record and Represent Knowledge

Dramatic Enactments

When students act out the content during a critical input experience, the likelihood they will retain the information is heightened.

Examples of Various Dramatic Enactments

Readers Theatre is utilized in many classrooms and is an example of a dramatic reenactment. The students are not to memorize the script. The focus of the activity is to read with expression using gestures and movement. This activity helps make the text understandable and meaningful for the student. For sample scripts please visit <http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>.

A science concept that can be reenacted is the water cycle. Roles are assigned to the students such as clouds, trees, ground, streams, lakes, and oceans. Those students not chosen will become water droplets for the activity. The water droplets begin in the center of a circle formed by the clouds, trees, ground, streams, lakes and oceans. The teacher reads a narrative entitled “Where does the water go?” and the students playing the water droplets move through the process. Water droplets can “flow” to different places because when it rains the water does not go to the same place. A detailed description of the activity can be found at http://www.berkshireremuseum.org/living_landscapes/pdf/Berkshire_L6.pdf.

The reenactment of trench warfare in World War I is a popular activity. Megan Underwood details this activity at <http://www.thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityBase/UnderstandingTrenches.html>. Tables are turned over to create the trenches and balled up paper is used for ammunition. There are four basic steps in the reenactment.

1. Army A executes a massive bombardment toward Army B. Army A turns around backward in their trench and begins throwing paper balls over their head to demonstrate the inaccuracy of shelling during WWI. Army B hides under their tables. Any soldier hit by a paper ball is dead; however by the end of the attack few members of Army B are hurt.
2. When the bombardment stops Army B comes out of their trench and hurries to their machine guns because Army A will soon approach.
3. Army A climbs out of the trench and forms a line before beginning to approach Army B.
4. Army A walks slowly forward using its remaining supply of ammunition, and Army B defends itself using their own paper balls.

At the end of step four there should be very few if any soldiers alive. Discussion should take place at this point emphasizing just how improbable the advancing army could actually overtake the defending army’s trench.