

Dramatic reading

Dramatic reading involves children remaining at their desks but acting the parts with their voices, putting as much feeling into them as possible. Dramatic reading activities may be suitable for:

- Reading lessons when time is an issue.
- Classes in which layout prevents creating a 'drama space' in the room.
- Children in countries where it would be inappropriate for boys and girls to physically act together.

Aim: to make the content and language of the story more memorable, to identify the motivations and feelings of story characters and to help children gain confidence at reading aloud.

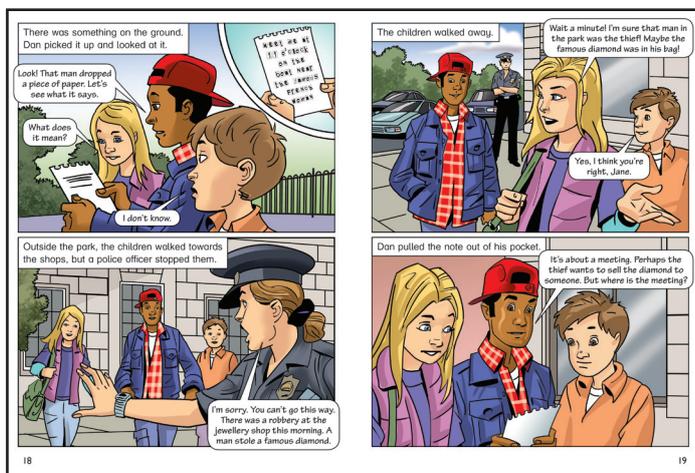
Read and do the actions (developing readers aged 6–7)

- 1 Play the audio for the part of the story that you have selected. Children listen and follow the words in their Readers.
- 2 Play the recording again. This time, children listen and read along to the story.
- 3 Explain that children are going to read the extract together, performing the actions. Then brainstorm the actions that children can perform. For example, as children read [In the Jungle](#) (*Young Explorers*, Level 1), they could mime Mr Bungle looking at the animals in the jungle and pretend to be the different animals.
- 4 Read the extract together as a class, doing the actions.

Assigning group parts (developing or confident readers, aged 6–12)

- 1 Choose an extract from a Reader with several male and several female parts. Ideally the text should be in the form of speech bubbles and narrative text so that it is easy for everyone to see their parts. For example, this text from [New York: Adventure in the Big Apple](#) (*Macmillan Children's Readers*, Level 5).

Alternatively, you can adapt a continuous text and give out photocopies with the different parts annotated (see later in this guide for information about how to adapt text).



New York: Adventure in the Big Apple

- 2 Since there will be more children in your class than available parts, divide the class into groups of children to play each character's part. Also include a group of children to be the narrators. You will probably have between three and five groups, so it may help to move each group to a different place in the classroom.
- 3 Explain that the children are going to read out the extract in class, with each group reading their role. Ask children to put feeling into the words that they are reading, and also to mime actions where appropriate. Explain that the narrators can put feeling into their words too: for example by sounding upbeat or excited.
- 4 Children read out the extract in class, with each group saying its lines. Cue groups that fail to read out at the right time. Read the same extract several times until children read it smoothly, and with feeling.

The audition  (8–12 year olds)

- 1 Find lines from your Reader where characters say things that highlight particular emotions, such as sadness, relief, cruelty or anger. For example, in these lines from page 48 of [The Snow Queen](#) (*Explorers*, Level 4), the cruel Snow Queen explains her wicked plan to Kay, a boy she has kidnapped with her magic spells. Then Kay is left alone and sad in the Snow Queen's palace.

'Where are you going?' asked Kay.

'I'm going to the lands in the South,' said the Snow Queen. *'I'm going to take winter to them. I will put snow on the mountains and ice in the rivers. I will make the cold winds blow.'*

'But what about me?' asked Kay. *'You can't leave me.'*



- 2 Write the lines on the board or photocopy them and give them out so that children can't use the Reader to help them remember the context. Ask children to try and identify the emotions of the characters. Then play the audio and ask children to check whether their guesses were correct.
- 3 Practise reading the lines in class, asking children to put as much feeling into the characters' words as possible. Children put feelings into the words naturally by using intonation. However, intonation is a difficult subject to explain to children so it is better not to specifically focus children's attention on the intonation that they are using. Rather, draw attention to the characters' feelings, and how to express them. Read the lines several times, until children can say them with the correct intonation, and real conviction.
- 4 Choose isolated lines said by different characters in the Reader and ask children to try to remember who said the lines. For example, suitable lines from *The Snow Queen* might include:

'Ha ha! Kay has got a piece of glass in his eye'. (the imp)

'I don't want to play with a silly girl'. (Kay)

'What's wrong? Why are you being so rude?' (Gerda)

'Don't worry about Kay. Stay here with me and I will look after you'. (the old woman)

'Try to be quiet. We don't want to wake her!' (the raven)

'Who are you? Why are you in my bedroom? What do you want?' (the princess)

'Come here, my little Ice Boy'. (the Snow Queen)

- 5 Give page and/or line references so that children can check their answers. Then, discuss the character of each speaker and the context in which the lines were said. What emotions were the characters feeling?
- 6 Discuss the idea of auditions with the class in Level 1. Ask children when people normally do auditions (e.g. for a play, for a film or TV part or to be on a talent show). Explain that children are going to audition for the parts in the Reader. Ask children to take turns and choose one of the lines above. They are going to read out this line to audition for the speaker's part. Children practise saying the lines.
- 7 Children take turns to audition for their chosen parts. The rest of the class listen. You may like to ask children to choose the best actors for each part.