

# DRAMA IN CLASS: STRATEGIES

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## Conscience Alley

A useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail. The class forms two lines facing each other. One person (the teacher or a participant) takes the role of the protagonist and walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice. It can be organised so that those on one side give opposing advice to those on the other. When the protagonist reaches the end of the alley, she makes her decision. Sometimes known as **Decision Alley** or **Thought Tunnel**.

This drama technique can easily be applied to a range of subjects across the curriculum, whenever a character is faced with a decision. It may be that you reach a certain point in your drama lesson, or while reading a story aloud, or describing an historical event, when such a moment occurs. Turn the situation round on the children/students so that they have to consider the issues involved. Then in role as Abraham Lincoln, or Oliver Twist, or Red Riding Hood, you walk down the Conscience Alley as members of the group whisper their advice to you.



# **Cross-Cutting**

**Cross-cutting (also called split-screen) is a drama technique borrowed from the world of film editing, where two scenes are intercut to establish continuity. In drama and theatre the term is used to describe two or more scenes which are performed on stage at the same time. This makes it possible to juxtapose scenes or snippets of scenes that happen at different times or in different places, using separate areas of the performance space. The technique is used to highlight or contrast a particular theme or aspect of the story. Using different groupings, both scenes could happen at the same time, or one could be frozen while the other comes alive. This can have a similar effect to spotlighting particular areas of the stage or using a split-screen in a film.**

## **Why use it?**

**Cross-cutting is invaluable for analysing themes in the performance of a drama by directly comparing or contrasting elements of the story**

## Flashbacks and Flash Forwards

Performers in a scene are asked to improvise scenes which take place seconds, minutes, days or years before or after a dramatic moment. This enables the exploration of characters' backgrounds, motivations and the consequences of their actions.

The method can be used to quickly bring depth to activities involving [still images](#) or improvised drama. Adding Flashbacks or Flash Forwards creates a context – it shows what led up to a particular moment, how it might be resolved or how it may lead onto additional challenges.

The technique helps to flesh out a dramatic moment or create the beginnings of a story.

### How to do it

- With a group that has created a still image, explain that when you clap your hands, you would like them to move silently in slow-motion to where their character was a few moments before. When they are frozen still in the new image, you can use [thought-tracking](#) to explore character motivation.
- Now ask them to move back to their original image – which is the present moment. Then you can use Flash Forwards – participants move in slow-motion to indicate where their characters might be a short time after this moment. In this way you have created an episode with a beginning, middle and end and can develop it in any number of ways.

## Hot Seating

- **What is Hot Seating?**

A character is questioned by the group about his or her background, behaviour and motivation. The method may be used for developing a role in the drama lesson or rehearsals, or analysing a play post-performance. Even done without preparation, it is an excellent way of fleshing out a character. Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs or small groups.

The technique is additionally useful for developing questioning skills with the rest of the group.

### How do you do hot seating?

The traditional approach is for the pupil playing the character to sit on a chair in front of the group (arranged in a semi-circle), although characters may be hot-seated in pairs or groups. It is helpful if the teacher takes on the role of facilitator to guide the questioning in constructive directions. To help students begin you can try hot-seating children in pairs (e.g. a pair of street urchins) or in groups (e.g. environmental protesters, refugees).

If the background of the character is familiar to the pupils, then it may not be necessary for those playing the characters to do much preparation. Although some roles obviously require research you may be surprised at how much detail students can add from their own imaginations. It is important that the rest of the group are primed to ask pertinent questions. Don't get bogged down in facts during hot seating, but concentrate on personal feelings and observations instead.



# Image Theatre

- In Image Theatre, [still images](#) are used to explore abstract concepts such as relationships and emotions, as well as realistic situations. This technique was developed by Augusto Boal and is described fully in his book [The Rainbow of Desire](#).
- Participants rapidly sculpt their own or each others' bodies to express attitudes and emotions. These images are then placed together and 'dynamised' or brought to life. The method is often used to explore internal or external oppression, unconscious thoughts and feelings.

## Why use it?

- Image theatre is a flexible tool for exploring issues, attitudes and emotions both with groups who are confident with drama and those with little or no experience. No one has lines to learn or has to 'act' in front of others. Imaging can enable students to explore their own feelings and experiences in a less forbidding way than that offered by improvisational technique

## How to do it

- In a circle, students create physical images in response to a given theme, for example, bullying. They should do this quickly, without pre-thought. They are then invited to step into the centre of the circle and remake their image. Other students can now add in their own still images. This could lead to an abstract group image or a tableau that is "dynamised" or brought alive through [thought tracking](#) or by adding sound or movement.
- Pairs or small groups can also create their own images, where they take it in turns to "sculpt" each other into a shape and then find a way to put these shapes together. This is most effective if done without talking.

## Marking the Moment

*Marking the Moment* is a dramatic technique used to highlight a key moment in a scene or improvisation. This can be done in a number of different ways: for example through **slow-motion**, **a freeze-frame**, narration, thought-tracking or music. It has a similar effect to using a spotlight to focus attention on one area of the stage at a particular moment during a performance.

Visit [BBC Bitesize](https://www.bbc.com/bitesize) to see a video demonstration of this technique

