



Democracy through Drama:

Open Education Resources



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1 Introduction

The *Open Education Resources of the Democracy through Drama* project offer examples of how drama has been used to support teaching in the humanities, languages and the arts through practical explorations of curricula within the classroom. It is intended that this document provides a usable resource for teachers so that they can implement drama in their classrooms to enhance their practice.

Within our Conceptual and Pedagogical Framework¹, we have suggested that both drama in education and mimesis in education can be important enhancers of democratic education for the following main reasons:

- ❑ They are both media / methods that create contexts of connection for young people with the most important issues, problems and situations
- ❑ Offer possibilities for young people to form their understanding and points of view concerning the explored content
- ❑ They both create spaces for young people to define the content they want to engage in and explore that through the framework of the story created collectively
- ❑ The focus on ‘the other’ offers possibilities for developing empathy and understanding from various perspectives
- ❑ Both Drama and Mimesis fuel the imagination and empower agency, the possibility of creating change in the personal and social lives of young people
- ❑ These approaches aim to move beyond the solely cognitive understanding of issues, problems, and concepts towards creating a physical or a social experience and a felt understanding.

The workshops and resources contained within this document seek to provide practical examples of how this is achieved. In addition, the suggested activities are open for use, adaptation, editing and re-working, as we understand that many teachers and practitioners will be working in a range of different educational contexts.

Following this introduction, the second section provides teachers with guidance on how to use the resources provided, which is further supported in section three with a guide to practise and some of the practical considerations needed. This builds upon our Methodological Framework² by moving some concepts within our framework into a practical setting.

Section four is split into two sub-sections, which are based upon the work developed for and during our two Demo:Dram summer schools in Marathonas (2018) and Budapest (2019). The first sub-section workshops were themed around “*Ancient Greek Journeys*” and outline eight practical workshops that were developed with teachers across Europe through our teachers’ advisory groups. It is intended that these descriptions of the workshops capture both the content and form of the drama in various contexts. To hear commentary from our workshop leaders speaking about their workshops please visit [here](#) or to see how the workshops were developed please visit [here](#).

The ‘Other’

By imagining oneself as an ‘other’ person or by taking on different roles, it enables people to consider alternative points of view. By doing this, people can then begin to understand different perspectives and empathise with those perspectives.

As a result of this process, people can then consider their own position in terms of their thinking and feeling about a particular person, their situation or story.

As Neelands (2002 in O’Connor, 2010: 122) usefully points out “Students can learn and un-learn through the processes of constructing ‘others’” and in doing so “the boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’ meet and merge”, which allow spaces for someone taking part in drama to “find oneself in the other and in so doing to recognise the other in oneself”.

1 To view and read our Conceptual and Pedagogical Framework please visit our [website](#)

2 To view and read our Methodological Framework please visit our [website](#)

4.1n- Becoming “The Infinity” by Giacomo Leopardi through mimesis (Gilberto Scaramuzzo)

Starting from the mimesis of the elements (fire, earth, air, water), the participants approach the words of the poem, *The Infinity* by Giacomo Leopardi, first in its original language followed by an exploration of the text translated into the participants’ mother tongues.

Mimesis is the human capability – according to Plato – to become similar, in gesture and/or in voice, to someone or to something. MimesisLab developed an approach to education based on this capability. The approach builds upon a concept of theatre as a mimetic action and uses it for educational means.

What are the aims/overall goals of the workshop?

Drama aims	Democratic aims
To explore mimetic responses to poetry as a foundation of civic attitude	Valuing cultural diversity Respect Empathy Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
To give sense and meaning to the word rediscovering its deep relation to bodily expression	Responsibility Tolerance of ambiguity Skills of listening and observing
To observe how words (from one language to another, from one body to another) express their meaning	Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices Autonomous learning skills Analytical and critical thinking skills Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
To give value to different cultures in the classroom environment	Valuing cultural diversity Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

What are the objectives/stages of the workshop?



Figure 58- Gilberto Scaramuzzo introducing the mimesis of the elements

- ❑ Rediscover the natural expression of mimesis through becoming ‘the word’- in this case elements of nature relevant to the poem.
- ❑ Experience how words of a poem can be treated as elements of nature and be expressed through a mimetic expression of the body.
- ❑ Explore how to recreate a synergy through the movement of the body and the vocalization of words.
- ❑ Experience how body expression is the common background on which the different languages find a common root.
- ❑ Enjoy the beauty of the expression of the same poems in different languages.

Why this workshop; what is the rationale for democratic values?

The core rationale of this workshop is to give meaning back to the words that bind human beings in coexistence. For a democratic space/classroom to be successful it is important that each person can speak and listen authentically. This authenticity can be aided by a stronger connection to the word and language of the learners.

Description of workshop process: what we did and how we did it;

Part One- Mimesis of elements

The participants should sit in a circle to observe a photograph of a fire. Once they have observed the image, the facilitator should invite the participants to make an image of the fire, using only their hands. This is their own mimesis of “fire”. This is done simultaneously as a whole group. Following this, the group should sequentially make the mimesis of another after they have observed the other’s mimesis of fire. One after the other, each person makes their own mimesis while the others observe for a few seconds and then make the same mimesis as that person.

After some reflective discussion, the participants should be invited to repeat this process and create the mimesis of other elements such as air, water and earth.

Part Two- Mimesis of poem’s words

The facilitator should read the following poem without explaining the poet’s name or any other contextual information:

“L’infinito” by Giacomo Leopardi²⁹

*Sempre caro mi fu quest’ermo colle,
E questa siepe, che da tanta parte
Dell’ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.
Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati
Spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani
Silenzi, e profondissima quiete
Io nel pensier mi fingo; ove per poco
Il cor non si spaura. E come il vento
Odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
Infinito silenzio a questa voce
Vo comparando: e mi sovvien l’eterno,
E le morte stagioni, e la presente
E viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
Immensità s’annega il pensier mio:
E il naufragar m’è dolce in questo mare.*

After hearing the poem read aloud, participants are invited to move a hand in relation to the words as the poem is read out again. Participants should respond in the moment to the sound of the words being read by the facilitator. Once this process is complete, the participants should be asked to move the body in relation to the words.

²⁹ This text is available in almost all languages. We suggest the use of literal translations.

To develop the mimesis workshop, the participants should be split into smaller groups, depending on the languages spoken by the members of the whole group. Each person in the group should take a turn to read the poem aloud in their mother tongue whilst the other members move their hands/body to express each word. After repeating this process a number of times, participants should then explore how to combine movement and voice whilst hearing the poem. Following this development and exploration, each group should present, to the whole group, a reading (with movement). The facilitator should then ask for feedback on the experience.



Figure 59- Whole group mimesis of water

Post workshop ideas:

The relationship with words is fundamental to all disciplines of the curriculum. Teachers could use mimesis to implement processes of approaching the meaning of any word, generating in the learner a true understanding of specific lexicons.

This workshop enables teachers to find ways that involve the whole body in learning: it reopens and strengthens not only the authentic contact with the authors of literature, poetry, philosophy, sacred texts, but also the ability to recreate particular processes of sciences, mathematics, arts and languages.

4.1o- A question of which role to take- Creating depth and layers of meaning (Adam Bethlenfalvy)

This workshop was designed to help teachers use the AMIMS structure (as explored in chapters 3.1b & 4.1f). This structure, developed by Dorothy Heathcote and discussed and developed by many others in the field of Drama in Education (Geoff Gillham, David Davis, Maria Gee), is central to this workshop.

It offers an example of using this structure to **devise questions** related to an image created by the participants of a drama lesson and also creating a reference point for the facilitator that can help in using **Teacher in Role**.

What are the aims/overall goals of the workshop?

Drama aims	Democratic aims
To understand a structure that can be used to develop questions that address different layers of an image	Valuing cultural diversity Self-efficacy Analytical and critical thinking skills
To understand a structure that can help in developing tasks for participants that address different layers of an image or situation they created in a drama lesson	Tolerance of ambiguity Autonomous learning skills Flexibility and adaptability Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
To understand the use of a tool that helps teachers stepping into role.	Responsibility Skills of listening and observing Co-operation skills Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Why this workshop; what is the rationale for democratic values?

Very often we only get to the level of asking the question ‘why?’ in relation to situations devised by participants. This is an important question, but it is also useful to be able to ask different questions related to other aspects of a situation. The AMIMS structure shared below is also a useful tool in devising tasks and also a helpful reference point for facilitators stepping into role in a lesson.

Description of workshop process: what we did and how we did it;

The facilitator asks for participants to recreate an image made by participants in the drama lesson about the Great Depression. The image below is shared– it was used in the workshop as an example – and the facilitator asks participants in the workshop to develop questions, tasks and possibilities to step into role as someone from the image using the structure shared further on.

The image refers to an iconic photo that was actually taken in the 1940s but can be found in compilations about the Great Depression as well. See the image referred to here.

Collecting questions: The participants were asked to collect potential questions about the image below. To support this process and frame the activity, the facilitator asks

What would you ask from a group of young people who were observing this image?