

# Bristol Old Vic

St Werburgh's new curriculum pilot 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

## Aim of the session:

To work with a year 4 class for two afternoon sessions

To reinforce the children's learning around Anglo Saxon village life using theatre techniques.

## Method

### 1) A series of warm up and setting up activities including:

Stop / go game – asking the group to use the space and follow basic instructions

Hypnosis – in partners take turns to follow your partners hand as if you were hypnotised (physical warm up, starting to pretend to be a different character)

Hand glue – in partners, imagine that your hands are glued together. Start to make shapes in pairs. Present the idea of there not being a wrong answer.

### 2) **Making characters**- in partners mould each other into characters including physical position and facial expression.

- Develop the exercise with more specific instructions.
- Give one partner a choice of characters and get the other to guess which one they are.
- Then get the group to look and choose. Introducing actors and audience.
- Get the children to explain how we can tell certain things about characters
- What do we think the character is about to say?
- Getting them to think about words/lines characters might say and how they would say them
- Giving instructions about how the characters are connected or related to each other and getting the children to think about how we let the audience know this.

### 3) **Develop into Tableau**- Making still pictures that tell us what characters are doing, how they are feeling and what they might be about to say. You can start to have ideas about what could happen next.

## 'The terrible accident in the playground'

Actors join the tableau one at a time as they have ideas and are chosen. How do we make sure the characters are feeling different emotions? Think about where the audience is so we can see the action? What do the characters say and in what order?

- Rehearse and then perform the short scene
- Swap characters in from audience to take places (making sure they have been concentrating/giving more children a go)
- add in some small movements to the characters to accompany their lines

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## 4) Anglo Saxon Village Tableau

A tableau including the whole class with as many characters as needed. The audience need to know who you are and what you might be doing. Can we come up with 10 different things that you could be doing?

Coming up with ideas (checking learning)

- 1) a baby is crying and a mum is swaddling a baby
- 2) sheep's carcass being cut up from hanging up
- 3) someone sharpening a knife with a stone
- 4) a man running back from a river shouting 'what a successful catch'
- 5) someone telling stories to an audience (a soothsayer)
- 6) a pig herd or a shepherd
- 7) a grinder of wheat or barley and a baker making bread
- 8) chopping wood for fires
- 9) weaving cloth on a loom
- 10) someone putting straw on his roof – thatching
- 11) someone making a house out of wattle and daub. You make the mud stronger by adding wee and straw
- 12) playing the lute
- 13) feeding the chickens

Create the stage. Then add the children one at a time to the tableau as they have ideas. Remind them to respond to the other people.

They build the tableau of the village all being the characters they have chosen

- What is your character holding?
- What is it made of?
- Bringing it to life in silence – come to life for 10 seconds and you will get on with your activities. Rewind back to where you first started.
- What sound effects does your action make? Make the sound effects as you make your action.
- What are you wearing? Think about your clothes

## 5) Burying everything we have described in a hole.

Start to put everything into a big box in the middle of the room. Take anything that you are holding and put it into the box. Take off the clothes you are wearing and put them into the box,

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Sit in a circle around the box, take something out of it and describe the thing that you took out of the box to your neighbour. Then describe to the whole circle:

- A black and white cows horn that she used to feed her baby milk with
- The stone I used to make the bread, it still has bits of grain on it, some of it has been rubbed smooth
- a bear skin to make a rug or a blanket to keep me warm
- a brown material net made from a bear skin with tiny squares cut out of it
- an axe for wood cutting with a wooden handle, an iron blade attached with leather made from strips of bear skin and tied on
- the soothsayers walking stick had a funny ending with a round bit which is a metal top

Place everything back into the hole

## 6) Summarise session and introduce the idea for the next session

Remind them that the Anglo Saxons lived 1500 years ago and that we will leave everything in the hole for 1500 years. Think about what would be left after this long? What will rot away? What will still be there? What would get rusty? In the next session we will be archaeologists digging up the hole and its contents. We will make a TV show called history today and we will talk about what we have found.

### Skills the session used:

- Speaking and listening skills
- Description and vocabulary
- Confirming learning of history content
- Performance skills
- Following instructions
- Developing creativity



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## St Werburgh's session 2 (Anglo Saxon Village)

### 7) Introduction to the session

Reminding them of our first session and checking they understand the format of TV interview programmes.

### 8) Warm up / Circle games

- Zombie game - Eye contact – concentration, teamwork, following instructions
- Copycat detective (Big Chief) – mimicking movements and someone to guess who is leading. Concentration, following instructions, understanding adapting behaviour to play
- Passing round the circle
- Taking things out of the box – guessing the mime. The box with one of everything in the universe in it.

### 9) Introduce a new box – full of everything from the Anglo Saxon world that has been brought forward in time. Toby takes out an object and describes it using words.

- Drinking cup, engraving in Latin, it's shiny, it looks like it is for drinking wine
- It's fluffy and it can makes funny noises, it's in fields and farms, it's a live sheep
- It's made out of cat guts and wood and it's a musical instruments and it's a lute. Who can tell us more about Anglo-Saxon musical instruments – pass it to another pupil – if you look carefully it's made of metal and stained wood. It has jewels in it and it's been used to send a baby to sleep
- It's very sharp and the top is made out of metal, the bottom is made out of wood and it's used to rip pieces off stuff. A flaying knife used for cutting skin off of carcasses. It is actually sharpened with stones and us used for cutting meat from bones, to cut bread, sharpened with a wet stone
- It's big and it's got straw on it and it has a fire in the middle of it, it has a thatched roof and the walls are made out of wood and the door is a hole. They just have to deal with the draft but sometimes they have blankets over the holes. The walls are

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strengthened with urine, animal poo and on the outside of the house there is a bucket of water, the roof its thatched with straw, the smoke gets out through a hole in the roof. The smoke keeps the insects out.

- It's muddy and it's been growing for 1000s of years. An Anglo Saxon book, a diary – toby reads the book 'I had a dream last night.....  
Getting them to think about daily life in Anglo Saxon times

## 10) Set up the TV show

- Get into groups of 3 – decide on A, B, C. Person A – audience, Person B&C on the stage
- Bs make Cs into people working at an Archaeological dig – come to life and they will work slowly and carefully.
- Ask the audience to find the story in the action.
- Bring the scenes to life.
- Give prompts to move the story on.
- Ask one pupil to discover something – it will be the box of Anglo Saxon life that we buried during the fist session it will be decade and old; it needs to be described, catalogued, and photographed
- Introduce the TV show Archaeology Today
- Get the pupils to present what they have found at the dig and take questions from the audience
- Swap people in to presenter and 2 experts so several have a go. Ask them specific questions.
- Introduce a second TV programme – what's the object?
- 3 experts are going to identify the object found from the Anglo Saxon dig. 3 experts have differing opinions e.g Spinning wheel/Anglo Saxon Frisbee/A spinning top with part of it broken up
- Get the audience to ask questions to the panel to work out who is telling the truth. Then get them to choose one

## Learning outcomes

- Improving confidence in public speaking
- Improving vocabulary – descriptive skills
- Speaking and listening
- Remembering facts
- Reinforcing learning
- Encouraging creativity

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## Evaluation

What is the difference in the children's learning when taught in this way?

Are there differences in the children's understanding?

What are the additional learning/skills that are being used?

## Questions to children

**We have been doing two things at once – drama and pretending and learning about history and facts. Learning history there are some right and wrong answers.**

- It was fun – I liked taking things out of the box and imagining them
- I remember the part where we did the cup of tea
- I liked molding the person
- I wish we could do more of it
- I liked playing the games
- I like the part where we discovered the Anglo Saxon stuff
- Starting from something small and building into something bigger

## Does it feel like drama or history?

- Mix of equal amounts
- More drama than history because quite a lot of games have nothing to do with Anglo Saxons
- Starts just drama but then it becomes more history

## Assessment – can you use drama to work out what you've learnt?

- If we knew it was a test it might have been different.
- We have learned more this way as we found it out for ourselves
- When we made the village you showed us lots of knowledge. Today you have reinforced it.

What is different about learning in this way?

How do you usually learn history at school?

What have you remembered?

Do you think you have remembered more or less than if you had learned this is a different way?

## Interview with participating teacher:

### Would you prefer training and tools to be able to do this yourself?

I think that it was beneficial to be able to watch and see how a session is carried out (almost seeing that as training) and then having other ideas to continue with after the session.

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**Do you think there are any advantages of having a specialist in and if so is this a good way to use them rather than using them for straight theatre?**

Yes because they bring new ideas and look at things in different ways to teachers. They have a lot of enthusiasm and confidence to take on different roles that many teachers may not have the confidence to do.

**What is the difference in the children's learning when taught in this way?**

The children gained a deeper understanding of the topic and were able to recall more information about the Anglo Saxons. They also gained curiosity and questions from the workshop that they now want to find out. They have more of a thirst to learn about the Anglo Saxons since the workshop.

**What are the additional learning/skills that are being used?**

Through the workshop I saw children gaining confidence, not only within their knowledge of the topic but also around their peers. Children were all willing to participate and take on different roles and share their ideas, many may have been reluctant in the past. Through the sessions the children's concentration skills and collaborative work skills were also being used.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and gained a lot from them. From my point of view next time I would pick up on some of their ideas and questions and address them before the second workshop to give them more ideas and information to work with.