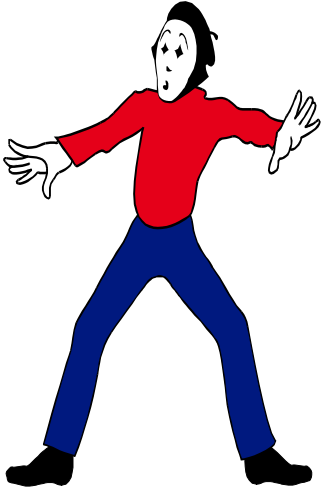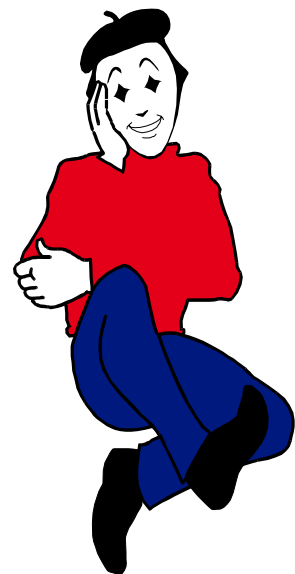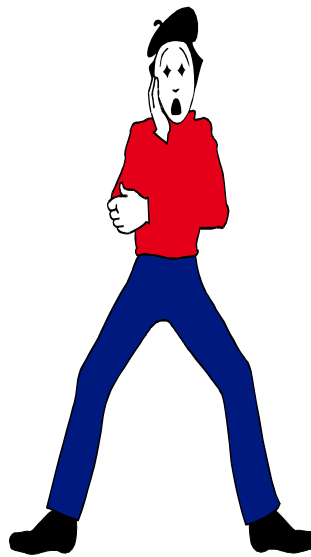# A Way into improvisation.

A year 10 scheme of work.

Resources:

- **Lesson one:**   **Conversation lines.**
- **Lesson two:**   **The circle.**
- **Lesson three:**   **Two packs of playing cards.**
- **Lesson four:**   **Photographs and props box.**
- **Lesson five:**   **Poem: 'The Loner' by Julie Holder.**
- **Lesson six:**   **Newspaper article: 'Testing time for a star apart'.**
- **Lesson seven:**   **Vowels.**
- **Lesson eight:**   **Assessment of polished improvisations.**

AIMS OF THE SCHEME OF WORK:

- **To encourage the use of appropriate and effective vocal and physical skills with consideration to character and situation, pace, projection, flexibility, timing and spatial awareness.**
- **To accept, develop and sustain a role appropriate to the situation, and understand the relationship of that role to others' in the group.**
- **To respond creatively to the stimulus, be sensitive to the shaping and construction of that response.**
- **To create opportunity for group work and foster awareness of sensitivity, generosity, commitment, concentration and ability to lead and support the group.**
- **To encourage evaluation of performance and group contribution.**

This scheme of work by Vanessa Tucker was found free at www.englishresources.co.uk

SEQUENCE OF LESSONS

Lesson one

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To introduce techniques and skills, and foster awareness of groupwork.

- ➢ **Introduction:** Introduce the SOW and explain that the class will be keeping a logbook throughout, which should reflect on and evaluate their work in lessons. It is also a place for writing down any feeling or ideas that they have.
- ➢ **Warm-up:** The group walks around the room as they would normally walk, they start to stretch their body. The teacher asks them to "walk as tall as you can and as small as you can. Now walk like a rock star on stage, The queen in a procession, an old man who has lost his way, a 5yr old girl who has been told off, a body builder on the beach" etc.
- ➢ **Invisible line:** The teacher demonstrates with an example using two volunteers: In pairs of equal strength you have to put your hands on each others shoulders and push as hard as you can but you must not cross over the line. Your aim is not to win so if you feel that one of you is winning you need to ease off and vice versa.
- ➢ **Whole class:** The teacher explains that the physical exercise they have just done is exactly what they need to consider when they are working on an improvisation, i.e. they need to put all their energy into the performance but they must consider and be sensitive to their partner and the space.
- ➢ **Vocal exercise:** Teacher gives everyone a line. They walk around and when the teacher says 'stop' they find the closest person to them and have a conversation with them using that line.
- ➢ **Invisible characters:** The teacher explains the scenario; you are shopping in a super market and a person has come up to you and accused you of stealing their trolley. Be aware of the space your invisible character is using and allow the piece to develop. Keep it going as long as you can but try to recognise when it has come to its natural end. When I say "React" start.
- ➢ **In pairs:** The teacher explains that the previous scene will be now be improvised with a partner, now label yourselves A and B. A is the accuser and B is the accused. "REACT."
- ➢ **RECAP on lesson and evaluate.**

Lesson two

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To encourage observational and listening skills and enhance awareness of build-up in improvisation.

- ➢ **Recap** on last lesson.
- ➢ **Warm-up:** The leader passes a series of sounds around the circle. Only the leader at this point can change the sound; two or more sounds can be passed around the circle at any one time. The idea is for the sounds to increase in volume and then return to a quiet volume, then silence.
- ➢ **Repeat the exercise:** This time, substituting gesture for sound. It becomes similar to a Mexican wave.

- **Mirroring Circle**: Everyone copies the actions of the person third to their right. The teacher explains that no one is to do anything at all. This Develops into an exaggeration of the person's actions.
- **Circle of Gestures and Sounds:** Pass a sound or gesture around a circle and call out numbers 1 = minimum 10 = maximum. The group are numbered 1 - 10 and have to keep at that level whatever order the numbers are called out e.g. Rhythm of laughter will be 1=snigger, 10= a fit of laughter.
  Rhythm of Crying
  Rhythm of Laughing
  Rhythm of Scratching etc.
- **Hall of Mirrors:** 10 people create a straight line of mirrors, they take a gesture or a sound from the rest of the group and pass it from 1 - 10 along the line and send it back again. The teacher must ensure that each gradient is made clear.
- **Pair Arguments:** The teacher gives a scenario e.g., A is seen with B's boy/girlfriend - an argument starts at level one and builds up through gradients to 10 and then back to one to making up again. This develops, other scenarios are used where the character has to enter into the scene where different gradients of control are used for A and B.

Lesson three

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:
To foster awareness of space and status.
- **Recap**: on last lesson's work.
- **Warm-up:** Each person has to say 'good morning' to everyone else, at the same time shaking hands with them. However, s/he must always have one hand shaking hands with someone else- so only when both hands are 'shaking' can s/he move to find someone else.
- **Running slowly:** The group runs slowly around the room (as if it is slow motion). When the teacher says a number and "stick," the pupils have to group together in that number but everyone must continue to run. The teacher says "separate" and then another number and it starts again.
- **Comfort space:** Each member of the group has to find a space in the room where they are most comfortable and show their comfort through their stance. They repeat this exercise in a space where they are least comfortable.
- **Pack of cards:** The group all have to pick a card from the pack (Ace is high) and walk around the room only using the space that their 'status' would go. This is repeated but they now greet people in a voice that is suited to their 'status'. The teacher then asks the class to line up in order of their status without mentioning it to anyone else!
- **Changing Social status:** The teacher discusses social status with the class. Each group is given the same scenario but a different social status e.g., a pupil comes home from school finds that her mother has left with another man They have to improvise an outcome to the scenario which is dependant on their status.
- **Recap on the lesson and evaluate.**

Lesson four: Assessment point for spontaneous improvisation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:
To encourage a creative response to non- textual stimulus.

- ➢ **Recap**: on last lesson's work.
- ➢ **Warm-up:** Whole class in a circle the leader starts a story with one word 'once' the story is built up around the circle each person saying one word. This is developed with two people starting a story and increasing the pace.
- ➢ **In pairs, 'Box' exercise:** A has a 'box' and takes out objects as quickly as possible, saying the name of each thing as s/he passes it to B. (Swap over). B must thank A.
- ➢ **The magic object:** The class sits in a circle and one-person picks up an object and says what else it could be. The object is passed to the next person they have to say it is something different and so on. This is kept up for as long as possible.
- ➢ **Props and costumes:** A box of objects are placed in the middle of the circle. Three people go into the space and choose an object each. After a countdown, they have to improvise a scene using the objects. This is repeated until all the class has had a turn.
- ➢ **In-groups:** A photograph is placed in each corner of the room (or depending on size of groups and room in a separate space). Each group finds a photograph and looks at it in silence for 10 seconds. The teacher counts this down and they have to improvise a short scene based on the photograph. This is repeated until they have improvised all the photographs.
- ➢ **Recap on lesson and evaluate.**

Lesson five

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:
To encourage a creative response to fiction.

- ➢ **Recap on last lesson**
- ➢ **Warm-up:** Whole class walks around the room and fills the empty space.
- ➢ **The numbers game:** Everyone walks around the room until the teacher calls out a number and the class has to get into groups of that size.
- ➢ **Whole class:** Get into a circle and discuss the warm-up. The teacher asks them what they noticed about the warm-up and leads the discussion onto the theme of being alone. The class is asked to think of times when people are alone. The teacher links this with break-time at school.
- ➢ **Build tableau:** The class builds a tableau of break-time and brings it to life.
- ➢ The teacher then reads a poem to the class called The Loner by Julie Holder.
- ➢ **Whole class:** The teacher asks the class to move into a circle, they read the poem, and discuss. The class is asked to think of the boy when he is 22, What will he be doing? Will he be alone? What sort of character will he have? What type of people will he associate with?
- ➢ **Build tableau:** They build a tableau of a situation that the boy will be in when he is 22.
- ➢ **Image of the hour:** They are asked to walk around the room. The teacher explains that they will be given three instructions, time, image, and action. The class has to make an image of the boy when he is 22 at a particular time e.g., 3'oclock in the afternoon, 5' o'clock in the morning, New year's eve, etc. When action is instructed they must bring the image to life.
- ➢ **Class discussion:** The class share their discoveries of the boy.

- ➤ **In-groups:** The class is divided into groups of four. Group A is asked to improvise a scene from the boys life when he is 22, group B, when he is 35, group C, when he is 48, group D when he is 62. They are given 10 minutes to rehearse.
- ➤ **Whole class:** The groups perform their scenes in chronological order.
- ➤ **Recap and evaluate performances.**

Lesson six

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To encourage a creative response to non-fiction and set-up work for polished improvisations.

- ➤ **Recap on last lesson**
- ➤ **Warm-up:** Two volunteers are asked to instruct the lesson's warm-up.
- ➤ **Whole class:** Read the article 'Testing time for a star apart', and discuss.
- ➤ **In-groups:** The class is divided into groups of four A,B,C,D. They are asked to discuss the 'two lives' of Jodi. How will she act in these two lives? What will the people be like? What is she like? How is she treated?
- ➤ **Tableau:** The groups create a tableau of Jodi in her 'first life' at school. The teacher uses thought tracking and asks the characters what they are thinking. This exercise is repeated with a tableau of her 'second life' stardom.
- ➤ **Improvisation:** The groups are asked to improvise a scene, which explores the 'lives' of Jodi. It should be explained that this will develop into their assessed polished improvisation.
- ➤ **Recap:** evaluate and discuss progress.

Lesson seven

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To continue work for polished improvisations.

- ➤ **Recap on last lesson**
- ➤ **Warm-up:** The teacher asks the class to carry out various breathing speeds, e.g. slow and deep, fast and short.
- ➤ **Ah sound:** The class stand in a circle and breathe in deeply when they exhale they make an ah sound, they let themselves drop to the floor as if they were deflating, ending up on the ground completely relaxed.
- ➤ **A,E,I,O,U:** Everyone in the class gets into one big group and one person stands in front of them. The group makes sounds using the letters a,e,i,o,u altering the volume depending on how far or close the person is to the group. If s/he is close, the volume is quiet, if close, the volume is loud. The group should be trying to communicate an emotion through their sound.
- ➤ **In-groups:** Rehearse and develop polished improvisations.
- ➤ **Recap:** evaluate and discuss progress. Ensure that all the groups are prepared for their assessment.

Lesson eight: assessment for polished improvisations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To perform polished improvisations.

- ➤ **Warm-up:** Whole class sing 'London's Burning'. Then in their four performance groups, they sing the song, A starts, B follows and so on, each group joining in after the previous group has sung a line. The last group to join in (D) should be the last group to sing.
- ➤ **Performances:** The groups watch each other's polished improvisations.
- ➤ **Whole class: discuss and reflect.**