Incorporating Theatre Into the Elementary School Classroom

*It spices up your curriculum while being interactive, multidisciplinary and just plain fun!*

We’ve all watched as young children “played house” and marveled at their uninhibited ability to assume different roles. Kids love to pretend, so why wait for middle school or high school to introduce drama to kids? Incorporating theatre into your elementary school classroom spices up your curriculum while being interactive, multidisciplinary and just plain fun!

Pioneer Drama Service offers more than 25 books to help the elementary teacher utilize plays, sketches or other drama exercises in the classroom. Whether you’re looking for a way to introduce classic literature—including Shakespeare—to students, practice listening, speaking and memorization, develop reading expression and fluency, build teamwork and cooperation or simply get your kids up and moving in a creative fashion, drama might just be the answer for you!

You can fully engage your students and add a spark to your study of literature through the use of drama in the classroom. *Dramatizing Myths and Tales, Dramatizing Aesop’s Fables* and *Plays from Mythology* give you opportunities to involve every student in your classroom. Shakespearean literature comes alive for even young kids with the help of aids such as *Starting with Shakespeare*, *Simply Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare for Kids*. In *Great Scenes and Monologues for Children Ages 7-14*, elementary students and teachers will enjoy scenes from children’s classics such as “The Secret Garden,” “Little Women” and “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Monologues include such contemporary works as “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown,”
“Heidi” and “Peter Pan.”

Presenting monologues is an outstanding exercise to develop a student’s speaking and presentation skills as well as reinforcing the important skill of memorization. While presenting poetry also can achieve the same goals, children love the opportunity to develop characterizations and use more expression in their presentations. Pioneer Drama has a delightful trio of fun monologue books specifically for elementary students, with age appropriate topics, humor, language and sentence structure:  *Wild and Wacky, Cool Characters for Kids* and *My First Monologue Book*.

Readers theatre—the oral expressive interpretation of a scripted piece of literature read in a dynamic, dramatic style—is an outstanding technique for encouraging vocabulary development, fluency and expression in all readers. Elementary educators across the country attest to the unbelievable joy that comes about when readers theatre is introduced into a library or classroom experience. Students benefit from readers theatre because they can see, hear and practice using English and developing their listening, reading and speaking fluency. It provides participants with a legitimate reason for rereading text in an enjoyable and engaging format. For first and second graders, we carry *How and Why Stories for Readers Theatre* and *Mother Goose Readers Theatre for Beginning Readers*. More advanced readers can develop their reading fluency and practice reading with expression with texts such as *From the Page to the Stage, Just Deal With It, Multicultural Folktales* and *Don Quijote in America*.

*Theatre Games for Young Performers*, *Show Time!* and *On Stage* are just three texts we carry that suggest many games, often including song and dance, to get your students active and moving while learning and building teamwork. These games
foster creativity and emphasize following directions, listening, speaking, non-verbal communication, group dynamics and physical control.

After incorporating drama into your classroom by dramatizing stories, presenting monologues, performing readers theatre or simply playing theatre games, your kids will undoubtedly beg for the opportunity to put on a “real play.” Don’t panic! Not only do we have many scripts ideal for elementary students, but we have whole books dedicated to helping you through the entire process. On With the Show!, Kids Take the Stage and Anyone Can Produce Plays with Kids are all comprehensive books that will support, encourage and inspire you to help your students become stars. For the especially ambitious who want to tackle a musical, Staging Musical for Young Performers is just the ticket!

Whether you do a little or a lot, you’ll be thrilled to see what a positive impact introducing drama in the classroom has on your elementary students. Even more than all the learning objectives above, you’ll stand up and applaud when you observe the self-confidence they develop with the cooperative learning of theatre.

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