

A message from Miss Tanya Kempston, drama instructor for '2007 English Drama Fest'

Hello everyone, it was great to see so many Drama enthusiasts gathered in one place during the Drama Fest Briefing on the 9th! Although I only had the opportunity to talk with a few of you yesterday, I am really looking forward to meeting and working with you again during the drama workshops on the 27th January and 3rd and 10th of February.

When you saw the 'Arabian Cinderella' video which I played, I hope you got a sense of what can be achieved with very little (or nothing!) in the way of props, costumes, set and so on. Now, I am not saying that everyone would want to create a piece which is quite as minimalist as 'Arabian Cinderella'. However, I do believe that we need to challenge our students to take risks and to display the extent of their creativity and ingenuity.

A good point was made - how can I use as many actors as possible so as to give as many students as possible the chance to act? You would need to think carefully about the piece that you used in order to include as many students as possible. One really good suggestion came from Carrie of Heep Yunn School - to use Longfellow's poem 'Hiawatha' as a starting point. If you read the Drama Fest guidelines, you will see that the stipulations regarding scripts are reasonably loose. So I think a drama created from a poem such as Hiawatha would be great - that is very creative adaptation of a poem. Other texts that allow quite a few students to be involved in ensemble work are: Homer's 'Odyssey', 'Mulan', stories from '1001 Arabian Nights', stories from 'King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table', Shakespeare and Grimm's Fairytales. They require adaptation - but that is one of the challenges you may want to pose your students: old tales are often the strongest and the best - there is a reason they have lasted so long! You can then 'block' or 'map' the story using the techniques I have set out in the handout you received at the Briefing.

Here are some more suggestions for scripts:

Scripts and Sketches (Heinemann Plays) by John O'Connor

Stagings: Shorts Scripts for Middle and High School Students

by Joan Garner

Simply Shakespeare: Readers Theatre for Young People

by Jennifer L. Kroll

Not for weak stomachs and other Funny Readers Theatre: Scripts by Diana Jenkins

Around the World in 18 plays: Folk Tale Scripts for the Classroom by Claire Northrop

Drama for Real Life: 16 Scripts about ten choices that shape us

by Steven Jones

Folk Tales on Stage: Children's Plays for Reader's Theatre

by Aaron Shepard

Drama, Skits and Sketches by Youth Specialities

You should be able to obtain these texts via the internet.

I hope these suggestions help! I will try my best to help out with your queries. If I find that lots of you are asking the same types of questions, I will then send a group email covering the points you raise. Once again, good luck with your preparations for Drama Fest and, as Shakespeare said, 'All the world's a stage'!