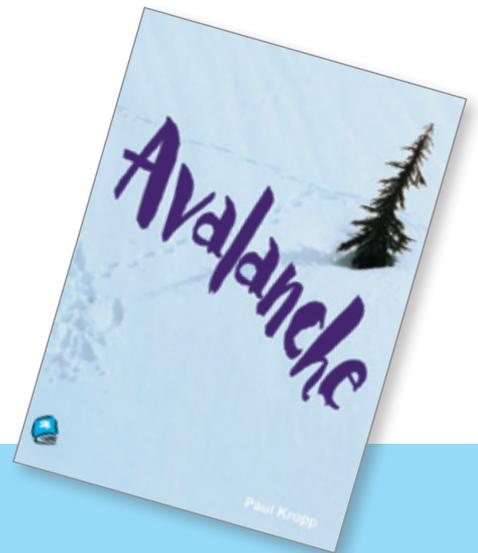


Avalanche

Drama Workshop

Inspire students to...

...imagine
experience
feel
become
empathise
enjoy...
...and then
read..



Bringing Robinswood High Interest Series to life





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Contents

Section One

Introduction and Background



Background Aims



Drama in Literacy



“I Don’t Do Drama – I Teach Literacy!”

Basic Drama Workshop Techniques



Using the Scenarios

Warm-up Games

Avalanche – the Novel

About the Author of the Workshops

Section Two

Avalanche – The Workshop Scenarios



Short Synopsis of the Novel

The Scenarios

Section Three

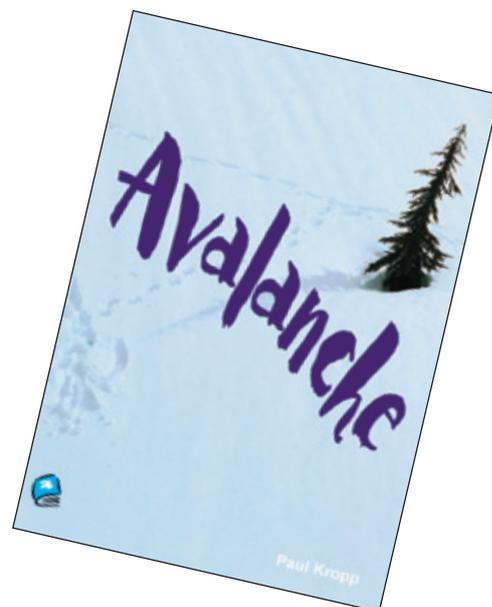
Warm-up Games



Introduction

Games

High Interest Drama Workshops



Section One

Introduction and Background



Background Aims

There are two principal aims to the Drama Workshops which complement the Robinswood High Interest novels. The first is to generate an initial awareness of the background to each of the High Interest novels through the emotional engagement of members of the Class or Reading Group. The second is to establish, as a consequence, the desire amongst all the participants – especially those least likely to read any book at all – to *voluntarily* pick up the novel, to open it and to start reading! The sheer paciness, relevance and style of the stories by Paul Kropp, and fellow authors of the High Interest novels, will normally result in the reader completing the book!

The Workshops have been prepared using elements of the story, with characterisations which reflect the actual characters in the story but without necessarily establishing precise or defining personalities. It is through the awakening of the participants' imagination, feeling and empathy in experiencing the possible circumstances around the story that the desire to engage in reading the story itself is created.

There are many features used in the editing of the High Interest novels themselves which encourage most readers to finish a novel once started. Details about the novels can be found on the Robinswood website but teachers will be pleased to note that all the titles in the High Interest Series are included in the Accelerated Reader Programme. There are, at present, two High Interest Series from Robinswood, the Primary Series and the Teenage Series.

Avalanche is from the Teenage Series. (*Content Age 11 to 16 years, Reading Age 8 to 9 years, AR Level 4.1, AR Quiz 214784.*)

Drama in Literacy

There are many benefits in using drama for improving literacy for all students.

Drama can be used to gain an 'experience' of a story. It can assist in understanding the context and content of a book, through time and place, and by having empathy with the characters and their situations. It can increase the range of language activities dealing with interpretation and meaning. It can be used to encourage and stimulate a wide range of activities, drawing on the students' desire to imitate and to use their own imaginative resources.

Drama can encourage students to experiment through questioning, challenging and persuading. Students can develop their speaking and listening skills through the use of role play, giving them opportunities to explore situations 'as if' real.

Games, mime, and improvisations can encourage collaboration, negotiation, and exploration of personal feelings, helping students to respond to new situations. This can help students perceive the world from another perspective – and to learn from others. Improvisations can help the students to explore literature and to gain insight into moral and social issues through 'experiencing' the characters and their situations.

These downloadable Workshops from Robinswood will hopefully give teachers a supportive framework around which they can plan their literacy activities and so, in turn, will inspire students to want to read the books! They are also ideal for Teaching Assistants, especially where working with small groups.

The Workshops themselves should give the students pleasure and interest through engagement in the various activities. Once they engage, and enjoy the process, you can start to challenge them and make demands on the 'form' of their improvisations, pooling more of their own ideas. Protection from criticism or judgement is important, though, so that they are free from inhibition, or can reduce this over time. Significant work should be acknowledged. Give them very small challenges at first. You are awakening the self-spectator, essentially through the enjoyment of 'play'.

This can sometimes be rather noisy or chaotic but it does have a purpose!

“I Don’t Do Drama: I Teach Literacy!”

The High Interest Workshops include a number of Scenarios selected from each of the High Interest novels. This Workshop concerns the Teenage Series novel, *Avalanche*.

There are various techniques that can be used in running a drama workshop. Even if the teacher has little experience of using drama in the classroom as a formal ‘Workshop’, many of the skills involved will already be utilised in general teaching practice or in classroom management. Bearing in mind the objective of this series of Workshops – to encourage the voluntary desire to read a novel – it is not the Workshop standard itself which is critical, but the outcome: emotional engagement in an imaginary situation which inspires all group members, especially those least attracted to reading, to get themselves into a book.

It is up to individual teachers to decide how they wish to use the drama techniques outlined below, or how they explore the Scenarios. This will depend on their own confidence, the ability of the Group and, consequently, the most appropriate way to create that inspiration.



Basic Drama Workshop Techniques

Improvisation

This is not as difficult as it sounds! You are asking the students to make it up – to improvise – as they go along, once you have ‘set’ the scene, the plot or the situation. If you have a very inhibited Group, ask them to mime the situation first of all, before they add any words. Alternatively, they could start by making ‘pictures’ of the scene through the use of ‘freeze-frames’.

Freeze-Frames and Freeze!

A freeze-frame is where, generally, a smaller group (but don’t exclude larger groups!) build a ‘picture’ or a ‘photograph’ of a particular scene or situation. Each group can choose which part of a scene to create for themselves, or you can provide them with a ‘story-board’ consisting of a number of freeze-frames which they portray in sequence. The ‘story-board’ approach will help them advance into improvisation if they have already demonstrated that they find it difficult to know where or how to start an improvisation.

A freeze-frame is not quite the same as when you ask, during an improvisation, for the group to ‘freeze’. A freeze is simply a cessation of continuing action during an improvisation, whereas a freeze-frame is more consciously developed as a specific but motionless ‘picture’. The end-result, of course, will appear very similar! However, the degree of conscious construction of the picture will be different.

Mime

Mime is an excellent dramatic form to engage the student. It is helpful to give them an ‘activity’ to mime which they can develop, such as putting up a tent, making a campfire, etc., which would be relevant to this specific story. Alternatively, if the student or students remain inhibited – perhaps they don’t know how to put up a tent! – ask them to mime an activity with which they are familiar first. Once they are confident with an activity, you can ask them to add speech – first as themselves, and then taking on a different character.

Thought-Tracking

This is a very good way of getting students to think about a specific situation, of what particular ‘characters’ in a scene may themselves be thinking or doing. You will need to split the group first. Thought-tracking can be carried out most simply from a freeze-frame, but you can also ask part of a group to thought-track where you have asked the rest of the group to carry out an improvisation and to ‘freeze’ at a particular moment.

When the freeze-frame – or freeze – is in place with part of the group, you ask the other part of the group to consider what each character is thinking. Ask them, before speaking, and when they have an idea of what a character might be thinking, to go up to that character, place a hand on the character’s shoulder, and describe the possible interpretation. See if they are right – ask the character in the freeze or freeze-frame to describe themselves what they were thinking!

This is an excellent way for them to ‘observe’ gesture and facial expression and the way the freeze-frame shows the relationship between the characters taking part. It also encourages the group to become more expressive as their confidence in the Workshop techniques develops.



Timing - the 'Appropriate Moment'

An improvisation can be fast or slow, long or short – it is up to you, your own time-frame, and your judgement of how an improvisation is progressing. However, there is often an 'appropriate moment', when the scene seems to be coming to an end. This is not necessarily when it is quiet: they do not have to talk all the time to create a scene! It is when you discern that the participants become repetitive, or lose concentration – just as they might in the classroom, when you know that it's time to 'move on'! At that moment it is good to either inject a new activity, idea or character, etc., to freeze the scene for further thought-tracking, or to end that scene altogether.

Using the Scenarios

The Scenarios used in these Workshops are derived from the situations in the novel. They are not, however, specific scenes which require to be 'acted out', they merely represent the circumstances in which the characters find themselves through the story.

The members of the group are therefore experiencing the situations in which the story takes place, but they are very largely imagining themselves in those situations rather than portraying the characters from the book. Again, the whole aim is to establish in their minds the desire to find out what actually happens in the story itself – to get into the book, to get reading!

For any particular group, the Workshops may therefore be used in different ways to achieve this aim. It may be more appropriate for one group to work quickly through all the Scenarios in the Workshop before reading the book. For

others, starting to read the story might begin much earlier – after just a few, or even just one, Scenario. It may be that you do not need all the Scenarios. They are a tool for you to adapt to your particular circumstances, with that sole ultimate aim: to inspire everyone in the group to get reading!

Warm-up Games

Sometimes, it is helpful to initiate the use of drama with games to 'warm up' the students. This is totally discretionary, entirely up to you! But we have included a number of traditional warm-up games at the end of this book which may be helpful – if needed!

Avalanche - the Novel

Avalanche itself is a fantastic adventure story. The themes within it include friendship and relationships, challenges, decision-making, fear, quick-thinking and working with adults. It is largely set in a mountainous area – full of snow, cold, danger and, of course, the avalanche.

Before starting, or early on in the process, it might be helpful to talk about particular aspects, for example, what a glacier is, indeed, what an avalanche is. But keep it brief – and don't make it too technical!

The Workshop has been written using situations in the story, but not the story itself. How the story ends is alluded to, but not revealed in the Scenarios. So, once the students have become engaged in the whole background experience of *Avalanche*, they will have to read the book to find out what happens.

Avalanche



About the Author of the Workshops

Sue Marshall was born in London and grew up in Hampshire. She won a Scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she studied Acting as a Performer. Shortly after leaving College, and following some rather diverse opportunities, she became a drama teacher in both a Theatre School and a Girls' Independent School in the South East of England. Here, she quickly discovered just how inspirational drama teaching could be – both creatively and as an educational tool.

Sue then taught at the Mountview Theatre School in London and went on to take a Theatre Studies degree. She was still drawn to performing and continued to enjoy working in Radio and TV as well becoming a Stage Manager and Assistant Director in professional theatre. When the family moved North, she became Head of Drama Department in a West Midlands Comprehensive School.

Later, she found her own experience – as a mother of three children – led her to an interest

in the Steiner system of education, where she worked for over a dozen years in a variety of positions, culminating in an Advisory role for the Fellowship of these schools.

In 2006, Sue returned to work within theatre at the Birmingham Rep, where she became an Education Officer, giving workshops in the Theatre and in schools all over the City of Birmingham and beyond. Through the Rep, she was also attached to the Family Learning Services where she devised Drama Workshops for literacy and numeracy within both the Primary and Secondary sector. In this capacity she also gave Workshops for parents and teachers to help particularly with literacy skills, and to enable non-specialists to participate and employ dramatic story-telling to enliven the curriculum.

Sue now works full-time as Head of the LAMDA Department in a Girls' Independent School in Warwickshire.

Section Two

Avalanche - The Workshop Scenarios



A short synopsis of the novel

CHAPTER 1 A Challenge

After much pleading, Tom convinces his good friend, Noah, to attend a meeting for the school's winter campout in the mountains of British Columbia. Noah is reluctant but, when a member of the football team, Mike Conroy, teases him, Noah's temper flares and he agrees to go.

CHAPTER 2 View from a Safe Mountain

Tom convinces Noah to go to the Rock Gym in order to get ready for the winter campout. Noah struggles to get to the top, but succeeds with only one slip. Whilst at the top, Noah notices Brooke Ashton, a classmate, on a treadmill at the other side of the gym. Tom drags Noah over to talk to Brooke. He tries to set up Noah and Brooke by telling her about Noah's rock climbing ability. Later, Tom tells Noah that Brooke has the hots for him. Noah is convinced that this is impossible.

CHAPTER 3 No Danger at All

Five girls, ten boys, two parents (including Mike Conroy's father and Mr Jacobs) and Mrs Falletta set off for Glacier National Park. One night is to be spent in rustic cabins and one in tents, if weather permits. The tension between Mike and Tom and Noah develops as Mike harasses the boys. On arrival, the students get a safety talk from a Guide, Kurt, who informs them about the cold, first aid, and avalanches. Kurt equips each student with a beacon used to locate a lost person should an avalanche occur. He also informs the students that a person buried under the snow has, at most, 30 minutes to live.

CHAPTER 4 CRACK!!

The party skis to an Arctic cabin 20 km away. Each student carries a heavy back-pack, so it is arduous. While cross country skiing, they hear cracks in the distance but are told it is the ski patrol shooting at snow to prevent avalanches. While skiing in fog, Noah trips and falls on something in the middle of the path. It is Brooke Ashton, hurt, tired and crying. She asks Noah to ski the rest of the way with her.

CHAPTER 5 Yellow Warning

That evening, the students are outside by the fire and the adults are meeting inside the 'Macho' hut. Kurt tells the adults that the Avalanche Centre gives a yellow warning for skiing the next day. This means that human-triggered avalanches are possible. Although Mrs Falletta is worried about warm weather breaking up the snow, Mr Conroy convinces her to go on with the campout, "to build character". Outside, Mike Conroy teases Noah about his blooming romance with Brooke. Tom, as usual, defends Noah.

CHAPTER 6 Not the Toughest Day

Next day, the weather stays clear and the temperature hovers around freezing. The students and adults see a sheet of snow fall from the top of a mountain peak in the distance. This omen is dismissed. Brooke snowshoes with Noah for the entire day. Before the students go to their tents that night, Brooke tells Noah to meet her at sunrise the next morning. Brooke and Noah kiss.

CHAPTER 7 Avalanche!

Note: this chapter is told from four different points of view. The events are simultaneous, not chronological. At 7:08am the avalanche begins. (1) The author offers a description of the avalanche as a natural phenomenon. (2) Two cross-country skiers, Abby and Rick Marshall, are on another mountain and see the avalanche. They know that the students and the three adults are buried down below. (3) Mike hears whispers outside his tent and concludes that it is Noah and Brooke, so he leaves his tent to spy on them. (4) Noah wakes up early to meet Brooke. After talking quietly for a while they both hear the loud CRACK of the avalanche. Noah steps between the wall of snow and Brooke in an attempt to protect her.

CHAPTER 8 Rescuers

Abby and Rick Marshall arrive at the site where the students are buried. Tom and two other boys are rescued first and they help to dig out the others. After twenty minutes, half the boys, Mrs Falletta and all of the girls except Brooke are rescued. Two boys, CJ and Jose Sanchez, are found too late. They are dead. Ultimately, only Mike, Noah and Brooke remain missing.

CHAPTER 9 Under the Snow

Noah is buried under the snow. At first, Noah believes that he is dead. Then he sees enough light through the snow and has enough air to know he is alive. He remembers being in a cast after a biking accident. Noah stays calm until he feels a sharp jab in his back. Then he hears voices and Tom pulls him out from beneath the freezing snow.

CHAPTER 10 No Happy Ending

Noah is in hospital. Tom comes to visit Noah every day and informs him that other school trips are cancelled, Mrs Falletta has been fired, and there are many lawsuits taking place. Noah blames himself for Brooke's death. Tom helps him to realise that Brooke would want him to live a complete life – a life for two people, not just one.

Setting:	A School Classroom.
Props:	Several chairs. A sheet of paper for the 'teacher', with details (using the story) of a planned class trip to the mountains.
Characters:	A 'teacher'. Several 'regular students'. A 'reticent' or fearful 'student' who doesn't want to go on trip. A friend of the 'reticent student'. A 'student' who is a 'bully'.
Preparation:	Set up the space as if in a Classroom. Ask for volunteers, or appoint the characters needed.

Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> Explain to the group that, in this Scenario, the 'teacher' is going to discuss a forthcoming school trip with students in the class. The school trip will be into the mountains – high mountains. Ask the 'teacher' to tell the 'students' where they are going, and to describe a mountain scene. Ask the 'students' to ask the 'teacher' as many questions as they can, and then to debate them, questions such as: "Where are the mountains?" "Why are we going there?" "How will we get there?" "What equipment do we need?" "Where will we sleep?" "What's the cost?" "Can we fund-raise for it?" If necessary, prompt them with further questions. Keep the dialogue going as long as required.
To End:	Ring a school bell or say 'Home Time', at the appropriate moment and they can talk about it as they walk home.

Setting:	Clear space for imaginary range of gym equipment, including a climbing wall.
Props:	None. A sheet of paper for the 'teacher', with details (using the story) of a planned class trip to the mountains.
Characters:	'Students': <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several 'regular students' as before.• The 'reticent student'.• His / her 'friend'.• The 'bully'.
Preparation:	Allow the 'regular students' to choose their own character. Ask the 'students' to describe all the equipment likely to be in a gym, including a climbing wall, and to imagine and agree where everything is in the working space available.

Action:	<i>Mime</i> 'Students' enter the gym and start checking out the equipment. Ask the 'students' to mime using the equipment. Every few minutes, ask them to swap the equipment they are using (by clapping your hands, or beating a drum). Once they have experienced miming the use of the equipment, encourage them to add in speech – if they want to. <i>Freeze-Frames</i> Now ask one half of the students to create freeze-frames while using the equipment. Add in the characters of the 'bully', the 'reticent student' and his 'friend'. Ask the other half of the group to sit down and thought-track what the freeze-frame characters are feeling. (A student goes up to a character, touches them on the shoulder, and describes what they imagine that character to be thinking or feeling.)
To End:	Hold a discussion with all the students about the thought-tracking and encourage reflections on the activities and the characters.

Setting:	Students travelling on a school bus or coach starting out on their school trip.
Props:	Plenty of chairs – at least one for each participant.
Characters:	Two or more 'teachers'. Several 'parents'. A 'driver'. 'Students' (as before).
Preparation:	Get the students to arrange the seats in appropriate lines as if they were seats on a bus.

Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> This can be an extremely short scene, but it can also be a very busy and imaginative improvisation! Tell the students that they are to create the hustle and bustle of getting on to a school bus for a school trip, and ask them to explore all the different relationships in character. <i>Include:</i> Waving goodbye to 'parents'. Choosing seats and settling in. The moment of leaving. Talking to the 'driver'. Etc...
To End:	Freeze them at the appropriate moment and tell the 'driver' to signal to the others ('teachers', 'parents' and 'students') that they are now arriving at a motel where they will stay that night.

-
- Setting:** A corridor and Reception in a motel, with doors to bedrooms.
- Props:** A few chairs.
- Characters:** Small groups of: 'Parents'.
'Teachers'.
'Students'.
- Preparation:** Have the students describe the layout of the corridor, and where the doors to their rooms are. Place one chair in each room to define the separate spaces.
-

- Action:** *Improvisation*
- Split the students into groups of four (within character, i.e., 'parents', 'teachers' and 'students').
- Tell them they've just arrived at the motel and checked in to Reception, that they are very excited and have decided to have a party.
- Action commences as they enter the corridor to go to their rooms. Once settled in, some music starts and the 'students' commence a party in their rooms and the corridor.
- Freeze and discussion*
- At an appropriate moment, when partying has reached a peak, yell "Freeze It!".
- Divide the group into adult characters and 'students'.
- Have the adult characters sit down and hold a conversation about teenagers.
- To End:** Discuss and reflect; switch to a discussion about parties.
-

Setting:	A glacier.
Props:	None.
Characters:	A 'leader' – a Mountain Guide. 'Teachers'. 'Parents'. 'Students' (including the 'reticent student' and the 'bully').
Preparation:	Tell the students that they are going to walk up a glacier in a number of different weather conditions, for example (from the story): "It is very cold with a biting wind." "The sun has come out, so you can have some lunch." "It is starting to snow and a fog has come down."

Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> Get the students ('teachers', 'parents' and 'students') to improvise packing their own equipment and back-packs, sleeping bags, shovels, ropes, etc., and to form a line with the 'leader'. Now ask them to walk in a circle in the first weather condition. They can use speech as well if desired. <i>Freeze</i> Using a drum or a tambourine get them to freeze in this style of walking. <i>Further Improvisation and Freeze-frames</i> Work through the next two weather conditions, first improvising the action, followed by freeze-framing. Start and stop the students by using the drum or tambourine at an appropriate moment. On the third freeze-frame, ask them to sit down.
To End:	Discuss and reflect on how they experienced the cold; were they scared?

Setting:	A couple of rough huts, up the mountain, with bunk-beds, and with space between the huts for a camp fire.
Props:	None.
Characters:	The 'leader' – a Mountain Guide. 'Teachers'. 'Parents'. 'Students' including 'Noah' (the 'reticent student') and the 'bully'. 'Brooke', if anyone wants to take on this character.
Preparation:	Tell the students that, feeling positive and enthusiastic, they will arrive at the huts where they'll spend the night. They're coming in from thick snow. They are to choose their beds, get their things settled. Some can go to a kitchen for drinks and food – others can go outside to make a camp fire, cook sausages to eat, etc. Maybe they'll sing round the fire.

Action:	<p><i>Improvisation</i></p> <p>Ask them to go 'off stage' and when you say 'Action' they can start the improvisation.</p> <p>Tell them, for example, that the 'leader', 'students', 'teachers' and 'parents' arrive at the huts. They settle in, use the kitchen or build a camp fire outside.</p> <p><i>Freeze</i></p> <p>At an appropriate moment, freeze them.</p> <p>Divide the group in two around the campfire. Tell them that bad weather is expected.</p> <p><i>Improvisation with discussion</i></p> <p>Get one half to be worried about 'health and safety' and to discuss whether the trip should be cancelled. Then have the other half be positive about the adventure and excited about carrying on.</p> <p>Ask them all to discuss the trip together and what the future days will be like climbing to the top of the Glacier, especially if the weather turns out to be really bad.</p>
To End:	At an appropriate moment, clap or hit the drum to tell the students to stop talking, to go off to their huts and settle down in their bunk-beds for the night.

Setting:	A ledge of snow on the mountain.
Props:	None.
Characters:	The 'leader' – a Mountain Guide. 'Teachers'. 'Parents'. 'Students' including 'Noah' (the 'reticent student') and the 'bully'. 'Brooke', if anyone wants to take on this character.
Preparation:	Make sure there's enough space in the classroom for the group to follow in a line across the room. Tell the students that the 'leader', 'teachers' and 'parents' decided to carry on with their journey through the mountains, despite the warnings of bad weather, but that some of them didn't agree with this decision. So there's some apprehension and nervousness in the group! Warn them that you will make a sound like a CRACK in the ice during the improvisation.
Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> Ask them all to put on snowshoes outside the hut. Tell them to get into a line and imagine they are tying a rope to the person next to them. They set off and start going slowly across a narrow snowy ledge. Beat your drum at an appropriate moment for the first CRACK! Leave them to improvise their reactions. Beat your drum for a second CRACK. See what develops...
To End:	This depends on where the group takes the improvisation, but it is likely to be where everyone crosses the cracks in the ice, or if someone falls through a crack! It is up to you to stop it at an appropriate moment by asking them to freeze.

Setting:	Near the top of the glacier, in deep snow.
Props:	None.
Characters:	The 'leader' – a Mountain Guide. 'Teachers'. 'Parents'. 'Students' including 'Noah' (the 'reticent student') and the 'bully'. 'Brooke', if anyone wants to take on this character.
Preparation:	Tell them they are nearly at the top of the glacier, in fact, they're near the top of the mountain. This is a short, quiet scene. If you can incorporate the characters 'Noah', 'Brooke' and the 'bully', do so.

Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> The whole group, 'leader', 'parents', 'teachers' and 'students', arrive at the site for the night. They're still roped together. Get them to untie themselves, pitch their tents in the snow, and settle in for the night. Silence as they go to sleep.
To End:	Go into the group, and ask them to wake up and reflect upon how they felt camping in the snow.

Setting:	Several campsites opposite the site of the school party's tents.
Props:	None.
Characters:	Several pairs of 'mountain campers'.
Preparation:	<p>Tell the students that they are no longer the members of the school party. They are other people, camping in pairs, up in the mountains and overlooking the school party.</p> <p>Tell them that all the pairs will awake simultaneously, get up out of their tent and begin to prepare their breakfast. It's a beautiful clear, sunny but very cold morning.</p> <p>At a signal from you, the couples will see an avalanche tumbling down towards the school party, at which point they freeze.</p>

Action:	<p><i>Improvisation</i></p> <p>This starts with the pairs asleep in their tents.</p> <p>They wake, get out of the tents, and start to prepare and eat breakfast.</p> <p><i>Freeze</i></p> <p>Play a roll on the drum – signalling the start of the avalanche.</p> <p><i>Improvisation</i></p> <p>This improvisation is a telephone conversation.</p> <p>Get one of each pair to become an employee at a Rescue Centre.</p> <p>The other will call from the mountain side on their mobile phone to report the avalanche to the Rescue Centre, and that it's very urgent: there's a school party underneath it!</p>
To End:	<p>They are all impressing upon the Rescue Centre that it's an emergency! (It doesn't matter how much noise they make!)</p> <p>At the appropriate moment, break into the noise and end the improvisation.</p>

Setting:	The tents where the avalanche struck.
Props:	None.
Characters:	All the students are 'rescuers': 'doctors', 'nurses', 'mountain rangers', etc.
Preparation:	Tell the group that the site is covered in snow and that no-one can survive under the snow for more than 20 to 30 minutes. The rescuers must dig in the snow to find all the school party members.

Action:	<i>Improvisation</i> Start with a small number of rescuers, gradually increase the number as more 'rescuers' arrive. They dig frantically for the remaining 'students'. <i>Freeze</i> At an appropriate moment, stop the action. Tell them that they have been searching for 30 minutes but there might still be some 'students' missing.
To End:	Ask them to discuss what that might mean, and how they would feel. Ask them if this might be what happens in the real story. And, finally, ask them if they would like to read the original story!

Section Three

Warm-up Games



Background Aims

There are many positives in the use of drama, including Warm-up Games, in literacy.

They can:

- establish a relaxed atmosphere in the Class.
- establish a disciplined approach to Drama.
- enable all members of the group to participate.
- establish an atmosphere of trust.
- free individuals from self-consciousness.
- build a relationship with the teacher.
- maintain a 'fun' element in the use of drama.
- maintain and develop group dynamics: group responsibility and self-discipline.
- continue to encourage total participation and concentration.
- maintain, build and develop a relationship of trust and freedom from inhibition with the teacher (teachers can play, too!).
- be used to maintain an ability to 'play'.

Make sure that games are disciplined and that self-control is experienced.

For example, when students have to listen to the centre person in the game 'Fruit-Bowl', establish the rule that the centre person is not allowed to say the fruit until it is quiet. Similarly, in 'Starboard and Port-side', ask them to freeze when they arrive at their destination. Anyone who doesn't has to be 'out'. To balance this discipline, and to make the game fun, *it is important that you enjoy the game yourself!*

This Section includes a range of games that are useful for 'warm-up' for your students. You can use the games which are relevant to your particular year and your particular group. Playing and games are for all age groups!

Don't worry if you repeat games. Students not only enjoy this but, as in formal drama lessons, use of drama techniques works in a spiral or circular pattern. By the time you have come full circle, certain skills will have developed with the students and their work will generally have more depth.

1. Introducing Ourselves

This is particularly useful where the members of the group are not known to each other.

Start by standing in a circle.

Each person introduces themselves round the circle.

Ask them to step into the circle when speaking, saying:

“My name is... I am... (shy, tall, nervous, noisy, quiet, etc.).”

Continue (if appropriate) by sitting in the circle.

Ask the students to stand up and step into the circle, when it is their turn, and describe what they like.

“My name is..., and I like... (chocolate, etc.).”

Continue (if appropriate) by standing in the circle, describing their favourite colour.

“My name is..., and my best colour is...”

Get everyone in the circle to repeat what each individual says in the way that they say it.

It is up to you to judge how many variations to play on ‘introducing ourselves’ before proceeding to another game.

2. Remembering Each Other’s Names

The students stand in a circle.

Using a bean bag, say your own name, then throw the bean bag to someone else in the circle saying their name, for example:

“Amelia to Harry.”

Now each student is going to exchange places with another member of the circle.

First, tell them to say their own name, then the name of the person they are exchanging with.

Initially, the students will pause to think of each other’s names.

Encourage them to speed it up so that eventually there are no pauses.

Encourage them to learn the new names by asking them, after a while, not to choose people, for example, from their old primary school.

3. Prisoner

This is particularly useful where the members of the group do know each other.

Get into pairs.

One sits on a chair (the prisoner), one stands behind it (the guard).

Leave one chair empty, but with a person standing behind (teacher, if even numbers).

The guards must stand at one arm’s length, with their arms down, and the prisoners must sit upright in their chairs.

The person standing behind the empty chair calls the name of one of those sitting.

The person whose name is called must get out of their chair without their ‘guard’ touching them.

Half way through the game change prisoners and guards.

1. Two Minute Autobiography

Get the students into pairs.

Person A tells Person B about himself or herself for two minutes.

Reverse, with Person B reciprocating to Person A.

Person A then tells the group as much as he or she can about Person B.

Person B then does likewise.

Change partners each time this game is played, gradually working through the class.

2. If I Weren't Me

Stand or sit in a circle.

Each person in turn says:

"If I weren't me, I'd like to be..., because..."

1. 'Fruit-Bowl'

The group members sit on chairs in a circle.

Name a fruit for each student.

One member stands in the middle and calls out the name of one of the fruits.

The 'fruit' called out changes place with the person in the middle.

Or the one in the middle can call out two (or more) fruit names.

The fruits called out change place with each other.

Or the one in the middle calls out 'fruit-bowl' – meaning everybody.

Everybody changes places, with the middle person trying to get a chair.

2. Variation on 'Fruit-Bowl'

The class sits in a circle in silence with a member standing in the middle.

The aim is to catch someone else's eye and change places, just as in 'Fruit-Bowl'.

They are 'out' if they signal through gesture or talk in order to attract attention.

They are also 'out' if they bump into each other.

Alternate the movement in this game by 'hopping', 'skipping', 'shuffling-on-your-bottom', etc., across the circle rather than running.

3. 'Starboard and Port-side'

The room is a ship.

The right side is 'starboard', the left side is 'port-side', the centre is 'mid-ships'.

"Captain's coming" is standing to attention (freeze).

"Sharks in the water" is off the ground.

"Scrub the decks" is kneeling on the floor.

The teacher stands on a chair to the side of mid-ships.

Start with everyone in the middle.

When you shout the command, the students run to the appropriate position.

Last one is 'out' and they join you.

4. 'Clumps'

This game should only be played when the class has a good social sense.

Call out a number.

The students have to group themselves in that number.

5. Fishes in the Sea

Play this game in a circle of chairs facing outwards.

Each member of the group is given the name of a fish, e.g., herring, cod, mackerel and plaice. (The names are given in rotation, e.g., every fourth person is a cod.)

Call out the name of a fish.

On command, the students with that fish name run round the outside of the circle and back to their place.

The last person back to their own chair is 'out'.

6. Grandmother's Footsteps

All the students stand in a line across the back of the room.

One student is Grandmother, and faces the wall at the other end the room.

When Grandmother turns her back, the other students run towards her.

When she turns they freeze.

Whoever Grandmother sees as the last to freeze has to go back to the beginning.

The aim is to be first to touch Grandmother and then take her place.

7. Variation on 'Starboard and Port-side'

Use 'North', 'South', 'East' and 'West', indeed all the points of the Compass (such as 'South-West, even 'South-South-West', etc.).

1. Blindfold

Students get into pairs.

One of each pair is blindfolded.

The other then leads the blindfolded partner round the room by holding their hand.

Then they lead by just walking beside their partner and giving them instructions.

Partners swap over.

2. Leaning Back

Students get into pairs, one behind the other, but both facing the front of the room.

The student behind puts their hands on their partner's back.

Now the partner in front gently leans backwards as far as is possible without falling.

1. Group Objects

Divide the group into small groups of 4 - 6 students.

Ask them to make an object, using only themselves, in two minutes.

The objects could be:

a car	a tree	a castle
a helicopter	a pot plant	a cathedral
a washing machine	a snake	a table
a boat	a house	a sofa

Now give them 30 seconds to do this (time limits galvanise speedy thinking and action!).

Give them a count-down, i.e., "5, 4, 3, 2, 1", and then ask them to "freeze!".

Prepare your own list of different objects so that you could go through this exercise each session. This game is not only one which they enjoy, it also works on many levels of group inter-action and it is non-competitive. You could also choose objects which occur in the story.

2. Warming up the Voice: The Group 'Yell'!

The students stand in a circle.

They crouch down and take a deep breath.

They all begin to stand up, making the sound "Aah" softly, but getting louder as they stand up.

Finally, on tip-toes and with arms out-stretched, they are yelling.

3. Group Rhythm

Students sit or stand in a circle.

Choose 6 students who can keep a bass rhythm with you.

Clap this bass rhythm, e.g., "1, 2, 3, 4."

Look at one member of the circle who must now add their own rhythm – with feet or hands – which is different to the bass.

Keep adding until all the members have joined in.

You can now conduct it!

Ask them to do it quietly then loudly, fast then slow, etc.

Great fun!

4. Machine

One student stands in the centre and starts a simple movement as part of a 'machine'.

Others join in, co-ordinating movement, until the whole group is working together.

Add sound effects, one at a time, such as clicking tongues or other original sounds.

5. Gibberish Talk

This game is invaluable as a voice exercise for the development of intonation and vocal expression, especially for older students.

Announce to the students the title of a small episode, e.g.:

"Buying something in a shop."

Divide the group into pairs.

One partner becomes a customer, the other a shop assistant.

They have to enact this episode by speaking to each other, but using only the letters of the alphabet, no words!

1. 'I Went to Market'

Ask the students to sit in a circle.

Start the game by saying:

“I went to market and in my basket I put a...”

Add a first product, e.g., a tomato, a potato, etc...

First student repeats, adding a further product.

Go round the whole circle with each student repeating the previous list, plus an additional product.

2. 'Chinese Whispers'

Ask the students to sit in a circle.

Whisper a message to the first student.

That student whispers the message to the second student.

Continue until the message has gone right around the circle.

Compare the end message with the one you gave initially!

3. Variation on 'Chinese Whispers'

Do the same as with Chinese Whispers, but with a non-verbal message, by touch only!

4. 'Kim's Game'

Put a number of articles on a tray.

Give the students two minutes to look at the tray.

Out of sight, remove one or more articles from the tray.

Ask the group to name the missing objects.

1. 'Pass the Object'

Ask the students to sit in a circle.

One student (or the teacher) holds an imaginary object.

He or she passes it to his or her neighbour, miming carefully to show size and weight.

Pass the object right round the circle.

2. 'Getting the Keys'

This is an excellent game for focus and listening skills.

Sit in a circle with a chair in the middle.

Ask one student to sit in the centre chair and then blind-fold them.

Put a bunch of keys under the chair.

When it is quiet, point to one of the students in the circle and say "Go".

That student has to get up, walk right round the circle and back to touch their chair, and then advance towards the centre to get the keys.

The blind-folded person in the centre has to point to where they think the walking person is. He or she has 5 chances at pointing.

If he or she succeeds at pointing directly at the student, that student is 'out' and goes back to his or her chair.

If the student reaches the keys without being pointed at, that student takes over in the middle.

3. Chair in the Middle

Get the students to sit in a circle.

Put a chair in the middle.

Each student in turn 'uses' the chair as anything but a chair, for example:

a computer

a wheelbarrow

a shopping trolley

a boiled egg

a hat

There is no limit! (But tell them that toilets become boring after a while!)

4. Newspaper

Get the students to stand in a circle.

Have a newspaper in your hand.

Hand the newspaper to the first student who 'uses' it as anything he or she chooses, for example:

a brush
a trumpet
a door-mat

Go right round the circle, each student using it as a different object.

Again, there is no limit!

5. 'Don't make me laugh'

Tell the students to get into pairs.

Partner A must try to make Partner B laugh.

Partner B mustn't laugh, or he is 'out'.

Reverse roles after 2 minutes.

6. Mirroring

Ask the pupils to get into pairs.

Partner A is the leader.

Partner B mirrors Partner A's movement, whether it's mime, mood or gesture.

Reverse role at an appropriate moment, e.g., when concentration or ideas start to wane.

7. Wink Murder

Get the students to sit or stand in a circle.

Chose one person as a detective.

The detective goes out of the room.

Everyone remaining closes their eyes.

You go round the circle and touch one person who becomes the 'murderer'.

The detective comes back in.

The murderer proceeds to 'kill' people, by 'winking' at them.

The 'murdered' students 'die' dramatically into the centre of the circle.

The detective has 3 chances to guess who the 'murderer' is.
