



## ENQUIRY IN ROLE

### WHAT IS IT?

Seeing a problem from more than one perspective is crucial to critical thinking, but it's not always easy to achieve. Drama naturally encourages learners to see in new ways.

Philosophical thinking in role involves bringing to life a dilemma, puzzle or problem within an imagined scenario. The role-play can be loosely structured around an enquiry framework allowing learners to engage with big ideas critically and creatively.

### RECIPE

- **No. of participants:** 4 - 30
- **Age of participants:** Suitable for any age
- **Preparation time:** 30 minutes for a basic scenario. Several hours or even days for a large scale scenario with script props, costume and production elements such as music lighting or set.
- **Delivery time:** 30 minutes – 2 hours
- **Materials:** You can run an enquiry in role with no materials at all, but a loose script, props, costume and production elements enrich the activity.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

The facilitator identifies an issue, dilemma, puzzle or scenario they'd like their students to explore. You might find philosophical thought experiments particularly useful starting points (see 'Thought Experiments' Tool).

An enquiry in role is then structured as follows

- 1. Taking On Roles:** The learners are invited to take on roles. You might go about this by giving them some element of costume or prop, engaging them in conversation or asking them to take an oath or to keep a promise.
- 2. Imparting Key Information:** A character or characters introduce key information; presenting the participants with the central dilemma. If possible introduce information via a performer (which could be you, a colleague or a recording of an actor).
- 3. Taking Stock:** Ask the students: 'What do we know?' 'What do we need to know?'
- 4. Dealing With Questions:** The students hot seat the character who imparted the information. They respond by answering the empirical questions, leaving the philosophical questions for the learners to explore.

## HOW DOES IT WORK? (cont.)

**5. Exploring The Issue:** The learners can then use dramatic devices such as tableaux, thought tracking, flash back, or forum theatre, to explore their central philosophical question. (See 'Dramatic devices' Tool.)

**6. Subversion / Challenge:** Move the drama forward by introducing a twist via a new character. The actor/facilitator may bring fresh information or they could present a different side of the argument.

**7. Decision Time:** The need to make a decision brings the enquiry to a head; maybe there is an impending natural disaster or the press are waiting for comments etc. These decisions can then form the basis of out-of role discussion.

**8. Reflection:** What did your character decide and why? What would you have done? How does your view compare with the view of your character?

If you'd like to use one of our scripted 'off the shelf' enquires please get in touch at the address below.

## TIPS

- This can be a time consuming activity to plan but once you devise a good scenario it can be used and improved year on year. A good enquiry in role can be used to introduce key issues in History, Science and RS. It's also useful for English Speaking and Listening assessments or role plays in Modern Foreign Languages.
- If you want to run an enquiry in role on your own, use costume and prop to allow you to play different parts.
- A voice recording, mock newspaper article, answer phone message or video performance can all work as dramatic stimuli if you don't feel confident performing yourself.

## FIND OUT MORE

- See work by Gordon Poad who developed the Dramatic Enquiry Approach at Cap-A-Pie Associates <http://www.cap-a-pie.co.uk/>
- 'The Pig that Wants to be Eaten' by Julian Baggini.
- 'Can a Robot be Human?' by Peter Cave
- See 'Concept Building' Tool
- See 'Dramatic Devices' Tool



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