**Message In a Bottle**

This series of two lessons breaks away from our usual format in that our initial story stimulus gives way to the student’s own creativity when they are asked to develop the story on in pairs, effectively making their own choices and creating their own version of the story.

The students ideally will be working with the same partner throughout. Obviously this might not always be possible due to absences etc.

We ask that teachers exercise some flexibility here. If a partner is absent then the other student could join in with another pair as an incidental character that can be dropped from the scene.

As an alternative (and children quite enjoy this) they could be a Director for another pair, advising them and giving feedback on their scene.

Each pair will also have the same set of **pair buddies** throughout (until the end) with whom to share their scenes and give mutual feedback.

*As this is a challenging lesson we recommend you actually tell the students this, saying to them Julie and Louise think they’ll find it quite difficult but maybe they’ll manage.*

By saying this we’ve often found (from the group scripting exercises for example) that they will rise to the challenge to prove they can do it.

Given the range of abilities in your class, it might be best to ensure that the students are paired up with someone of similar writing ability.

They should be able to handle these aspects of the lessons and the teacher can support and help pairs would might struggle with this and find ways to help them.

**THERE IS FEEDBACK AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS DOCUMENTATION FROM OUR PILOT LESSONS WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR TEACHERS**

**The Video Lesson**

**1. Finding The Message - Watching & Listening, Paired Improvisation**

We demonstrate being two children Ollie and Chris, fishing in a mountain stream when they find a message in a bottle. The letter is from a loner living wild in the mountains. This person called Alex is hurt and needs a Doctor but does not want publicity of any kind and asks that the help mission is kept a secret.
The two children don’t know what to do. Their instinct is to tell an adult but they can see that this might not go well in terms of the secret keeping aspect. What can they, a couple of kids really do to help? They are also aware that it might be risky to offer a stranger help like this with no-one else knowing but they also feel they should do something.

They decide not to reply quite yet but think about what to do and meet again the next day to agree on what they should do.

Over To You - The students are asked to enact the scene with a partner.

After a while you can have a look at some of these scenes and invite feedback.

2. Conscience Alley - For And Against Action, Improvisation

In the next section we discuss some of the thoughts that the two children will have as they are caught in a dilemma.

You can discuss this generally with the students and ask questions of them in assessing what they could do.

A big question mark is over the children’s safety. They do not know this stranger and could maybe place themselves in danger if they are not careful.

We explain a Drama technique usually referred to as a Conscience Alley to demonstrate two sides to decision making/dilemmas.

The students will create two facing lines representing a for (offering help) and against (not offering help or getting involved).

The students will be divided into these two sides and should think about a spoken line to say which is appropriate to their side of the argument.

Someone is then chosen to slowly walk the Conscience Alley and in turn from one side to the other the students fire their arguments at this person.

After a practice hearing each spoken line you can hike up the drama and build up the exercise by using a repetition technique which eventually has everyone speaking at once, overpowering the mind of the walker.

Note - Conscience Alley Technique is a very powerful exercise so make sure that the students walking through want to do it and you feel that they will be able to handle it.

Over To You - Set up the Conscience Alley and give some students a chance to walk it if they want to. You can discuss how it felt both going through the Conscience Alley and being a part of the corridor.
3. Replying To The Message - Writing A Letter /Note Reply & Using Within A Scene

In this scene we demonstrate what happens the next day when the friends meet up. They have reached their decision and begin to write the letter only we stop short of actually saying what the decision is.

We now prompt the students to think (in their pairs) of what they would decide to do, given all the sides of the argument for and against and coming to a decision.

We tell them only that the children have decided to help in some way but it’s up to them now to decide how they will do this.

Over To You - In their pairs they will now discuss their replies and finish the reply messages.

They can then use these within their version of the scene that we have just demonstrated and then show these to their pair buddies to discuss and give feedback.

Pilot Feedback On Message In A Bottle

It went really well and the class enjoyed taking part. They loved the conscience alley, we did it quite a few times because they really responded to it. They were keen to write their replies to Alex and although some of them needed a bit of guidance, they all succeeded in the task. Quite a lot of them wrote in their reply that they would just 'get a doctor', so we discussed keeping Alex's secret and how they would just 'get a doctor'! Replies to Alex were quite similar in my class - get a doctor who is a family member and will keep their secret or bring supplies to Alex to help him themselves.

When they acted out their scene for what happens next (lesson 2) I would say quite a few changed their storyline from what they had written in their reply to structure their scene like yours. So those who said they would bring supplies were actually acting out a doctor scene. Or those who were bringing a doctor to the bothy were in the hospital filling out a form. I questioned them a bit about this and reminded them about their reply to Alex but didn't make them change their scene.

The last scene to end the story had a bit more variation, from Alex making friends to Ollie/Chris going for a cup of tea with Alex in the bothy! They were happy to write their stories (sometimes we lack enthusiasm to write!) and I let them do this on iPad as they were working in pairs. They used a mix of narration and direct speech. Some weren't too sure how to narrate that the story has moved on, so that would be a teaching point for me next time.

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