

Detectives

A Detective Drama for Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)



This drama sets up the class as a team of detectives, and was created for use in a withdrawal type setting with a group of learners who have a variety of SEN including ASD, ADHD, dyspraxia and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The drama focuses on developing self-esteem, being part of a team, following verbal group instructions and context appropriate language. The drama is suitable for primary school level, up to at least fourth class, as the games, props-making and mission incorporated into the storyline can be scaled up or down depending on the children's level and ability. In order to aid successful task completion, the children are given opportunities to practise skills before these need to be 'officially' used in the drama. Visual support is provided through pictures, props and costume which can aid the children's focus on the drama. The children's investment in the drama is encouraged by providing opportunities for them to create their own personal props and individual identities within the drama. A Special Needs Assistant or Teacher's Assistant is invaluable in a drama lesson for learners with SEN. Although correction whilst in role is very effective, an important technique to use with this group of learners is to 'freeze the drama' if there is an issue that needs to be dealt with immediately.

Note: This lesson plan can be a stand-alone drama lesson or can be used to set up a scheme of drama lessons where the children are in role as detectives.

Resources

For this drama session you will need:

- classroom tables and chairs
- art material for making props – cardboard, scissors, coloured pencils/pens
- A4 size picture of a traffic light (Resource A)
- A4 size picture of a police officer directing traffic (Resource B)
- A4 size pages; one with a large red coloured circle, one with a large green circle, one with a large yellow circle, one with a large green arrow turning left and one with a large green arrow turning right (Resource C)
- a police hat for teacher in role as the Inspector
- masking tape

Starting the Drama Session



The lesson begins with everyone sitting in a circle either on the floor or on chairs (sitting on the floor can create a relaxed atmosphere but sitting on chairs can help some children, especially those with ADHD, keep on task and keep their hands and feet to themselves). The teacher welcomes everyone to the group and explains that this drama class is not about putting on a show for an audience; instead, this drama is all about using our imagination, pretending to be someone else and going on an adventure. The teacher explains that the **aims** of this drama

session are to **work as a team**, to **look and listen carefully** and to **use our imagination**. At this point, it is also important to highlight the **drama class rules**: follow teacher's instructions, don't leave the classroom and no hitting or hurting.

The teacher displays a picture of traffic lights on the wall (**Resource A**) and explains that the class is starting off with a game of 'Traffic Lights' (this will work off any excess energy and help the children focus on the drama). The teacher then puts a strip of masking tape across the floor at each end of the room. The children stand along the strip of tape at one end of the room and the teacher stands behind the strip of tape at the opposite end of the room. The teacher holds the set of five pages (**Resource C**) one of which has a large green circle on it, one has a yellow circle, one a red circle, one a green arrow turning left and one green arrow turning right. The teacher elicits what the different colours and symbols mean for drivers of cars. The children are asked to **move slowly** when the teacher holds up the **yellow** card, **move fast** for **green**, **stop** for **red**, and **turn left or right** depending on the **arrow**. The teacher calls out, one at a time, either "green", "red", "yellow", "turn left" or "turn right" whilst holding up the corresponding card. The aim for the children is to be first across the strip of tape at the opposite end of the room. Older or more capable groups can do this task in pairs with their arms linked so that they must concentrate on moving together. With younger or less capable groups, the teacher may prefer to use only the green, red and yellow cards; omitting the use of the arrows. The teacher and the children play the game a few times and, for the last game, the teacher does not use the cards so that the children are following verbal instructions only.

Teacher and children return to sit in the group circle. The teacher asks the children what might happen if the traffic lights were broken; how would the cars know when to go and when to stop? The teacher first elicits suggestions from the children and, if no one mentions it, goes on to explain that sometimes the police/gardaí, have to direct the traffic. The teacher asks the children if they have ever seen a policeman or woman directing traffic, in Ireland or another country, and holds up a picture of a police officer directing traffic (**Resource C**). The teacher asks the children what other jobs the police do and elicits suggestions such as helping people, solving crimes, catching criminals.

Introducing the Drama



Teacher Narration: *This is a drama all about solving a crime and in this drama you are members of An Garda Síochána. You are hoping to join a special team of detectives in the gardaí because you are particularly good at finding clues and solving puzzling crimes. Only the really best gardaí are given the opportunity to join this detective team. You have all been selected for the team because of your unique skills, however, you have one last piece of training to complete. In this training session you will be instructed by Inspector Casey. We are going to meet Inspector Casey, but before we do, we need to set up the meeting space. We need to arrange the chairs and table for the meeting with the Inspector.*

The teacher encourages the children to work together to set up the space like a meeting room. When this has been done, the children sit in their chairs in the meeting room and leave a chair for the Inspector.

Teacher: *First of all, what should we do when the Inspector comes into the room? Should we stand up or stay seated? ... Now we need to make sure we all know how to talk to the Inspector, should we speak casually - any old way, or should we be very polite and formal? ... And who is going to open the door when the Inspector knocks? ...*

The children practise standing up all at the same time and maybe saluting if this has been suggested.

Teacher in Role



Note: When the teacher goes into role, she/he says 'I am going to pretend...' This is a deliberate use of the word 'pretend' as it is important to make it very clear to students, particularly those with SEN, that the drama is in an imagined world, not the real one.

Teacher: *Well done, you have prepared very well, I think we are ready. I am going to pretend to be Inspector Casey. When I put on this hat, you will know that I am Inspector Casey.*

The teacher puts on the hat and stands just outside the open door and knocks. One of the children opens the door fully and the teacher enters the room in role as Inspector Casey.

Teacher in Role as Inspector Casey: *Hello gardaí. [Children respond.] Please sit down and relax for the moment. I am glad to see that you are all fit and well and ready for your final stage of training. First of all congratulations to you all for getting this far. Only the very best gardaí make it to this level of detective work. You have been specially selected for your ability to work as a team and your ability to find clues and solve puzzling crimes. So first of all we need to ensure that you can all follow orders. The first test will be to make sure you can follow the orders of your commanding officer, me, Inspector Casey. Have you ever played the game 'Simon Says'? ... Well we use that game in our training but call it 'Inspector Casey Says'. So Inspector Casey says "Stand up!"*

In their roles teacher and children continue the game which is a variation of 'Simon Says'. The children in role as gardaí are asked to follow an instruction only when it is prefaced by "Inspector Casey says...." The teacher in role gives instructions such as stand on one leg, salute, touch your toes, point to the left, point to the right, jump up and down, freeze. When the game has been played for a short while, the teacher continues in role for the next task, as outlined below.

Teacher in Role as Inspector Casey: *Well done, the next challenge is called 'Looking for Clues'. I am going to stand in the middle of the group and ask you take a good look at me. When I say "Ready" I will freeze and I want you to look very carefully at the way I am standing, my clothes, my hands, my feet and the expression on my face. Then I will ask you to turn around, so that your back is facing me, and I will make three changes to myself. They will be little changes, for example, I might change the*

position of my feet, move my hand, tilt my head, open a button on my jacket; little changes like that. Then I will ask you to look at me again and I want you to work together to try and spot what I have changed.

[Do this three times with the group. With older, or more capable children, the game can be played in pairs, enabling the children to take turns at changing three things about how they look.]

Well done. Your next challenge is to see if you can go undercover. Sometimes detectives need to go undercover, in disguise, so no one will recognise that they are gardaí; I need to see if you are capable of that. So first of all let me see you walking around the room in your official role as gardaí on patrol; stand tall, back straight, on duty and walk. [The children walk around the room in role as gardaí.] ***Good. Now, I am going to ask you to walk around the room this time as if you are a tourist who is lost and you don't know where you are.*** [Children respond as appropriate to the instruction.] ***Now walk as if you are someone who has a very bad pain in their back; show me how you would walk differently. ... Now walk as if you are a business person wearing a very expensive suit and you realise that you are late for a very important appointment. ... Now walk as if you have just lost your brand new, very expensive mobile phone, you think you might have dropped it somewhere around here. Where could it be? ... Well done. Now you are back to being a garda on duty, let me see how you patrol the area. ... Good. Now stop, well done.***

Remember, it is very important, especially if you are undercover, that you have your garda badge with you at all times. I am going to do a badge inspection to make sure your badges are in proper order.

Props-Making



The teacher stops the drama here and comes out of role taking off the hat and saying “I’m going to stop here for a moment and I am back to myself as teacher”. The teacher explains to the children that they are going to make their own garda badges for the drama.

The badges consist of folded pieces of cardboard. The teacher hands out strips of cardboard (each strip is half an A5 page, approximately 7cm X 21cm). The teacher shows the children how to fold the cardboard in half to make a wallet that can be flipped open. Depending on their ability, the children can draw the outline of a garda badge inside one half of the cardboard wallet or simply stick a pre-prepared badge onto the card. When they have made the badge, the teacher asks the children to think up their own garda name for the drama, for example, Garda Byrne. The teacher reminds the children that their name in the drama should be different from their own name. Each of the children also needs to think up their individual field of speciality, for example, finding clues, running fast to catch criminals, computer work, code-breaking, working with sniffer dogs. The children can write their name and speciality on the opposite side of their cardboard wallet, facing the garda badge, so that when they flip open the wallet, inside is the badge on one side and their name and speciality on the other. The teacher checks that everyone has a garda name, a speciality and a badge. The teacher explains that they will need to hold up their badge in their left hand whilst saying their name and speciality and then shake hands with Inspector Casey with their right hand. For example, “Garda O’Malley. Speciality:

Code-Breaking". The children practise with their teacher, or in pairs with each other before the teacher puts on the hat and goes back into role as Inspector Casey.

Teacher in Role as Inspector Casey: Now it is time for the inspection. Line up please so that I can check your badge. Garda, what is your name and speciality? [The child responds.] ***Let me see your badge.*** [Inspect the child's badge and then hand it back to him/her.] ***Good, we need your skills on our team. Garda*** [use the name chosen by the child], ***I am very happy to invite you join the detective team, let me be the first to shake your hand, congratulations.*** [Continue to ask all the children individually their name and speciality. Shake each child's hand and use their drama names to congratulate each one of them.]
Well done gardaí, give yourselves a round of applause for making it onto the detective team! [All clap.]

Ending the Drama



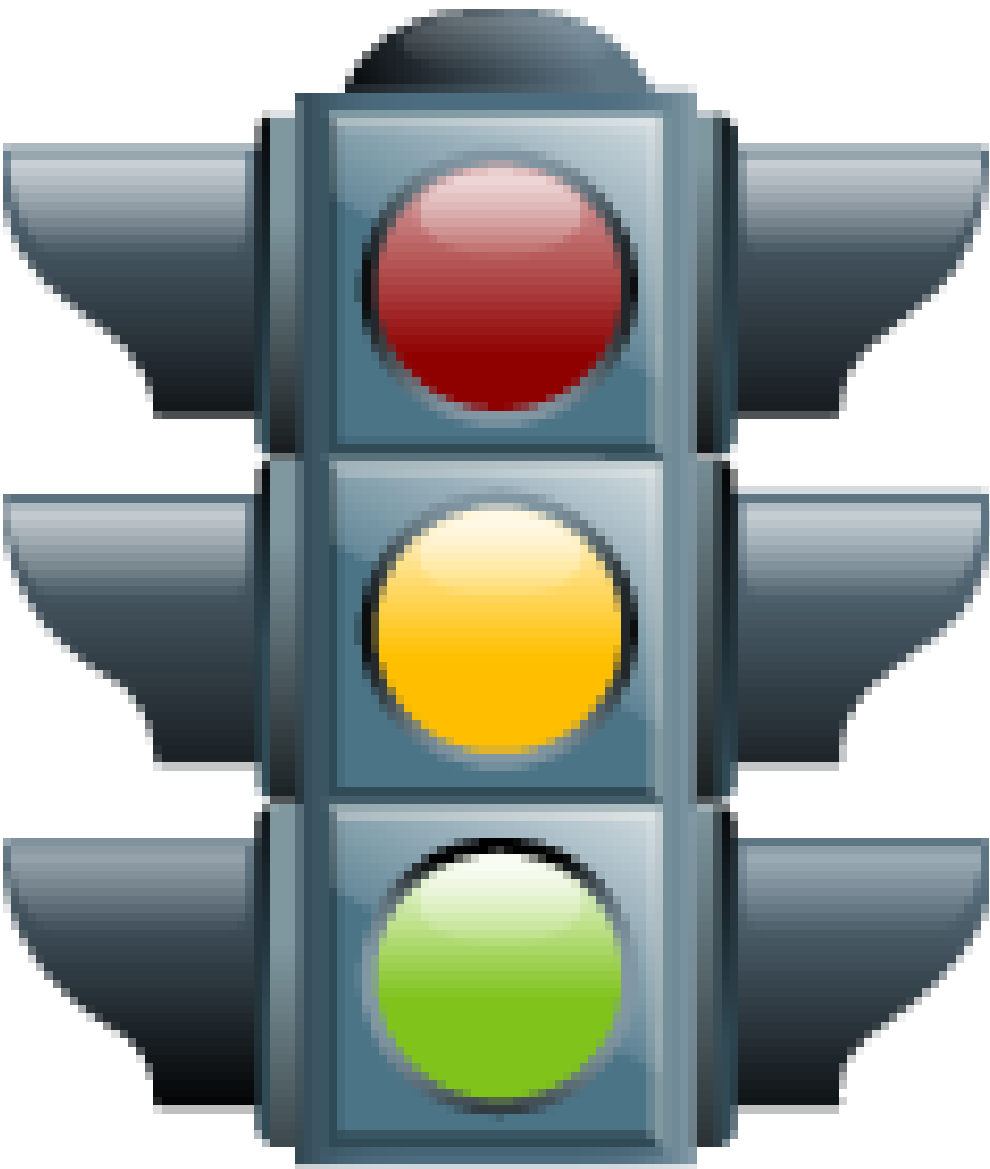
The teacher removes the hat and explains that he/she is back to being teacher and that the drama has come to an end for today. The teacher says that everyone is back to being themselves and collects the badges from the children so that these can be used in the next drama lesson if the scheme is being continued with this class. Everyone returns to sit in the group circle for a final reflection on the drama. The teacher asks the children to think back over the **aims** of the drama, which were to **work as a team**, to **look and listen carefully** and to **use our imagination**. The teacher asks the children to identify where in the drama they achieved those aims; for example they might mention that they were listening carefully during the task 'Inspector Casey Says' or looking carefully and working as a team when they were checking for changes made by Inspector Casey in the game 'Looking for Clues'.

The drama can finish here, or if the teacher wishes, the storyline can be continued in the next lesson when Inspector Casey presents the detectives with their first case. The case storyline of the dramas that follow can incorporate learning areas that the teacher wishes to focus on with the group, for example, the teacher could work on interpretation of facial expressions in a lesson where children in role as gardaí interview teacher in role as a suspect, thereby providing opportunities for the children to observe, discuss and interpret the teacher in role's facial expressions within the context of the drama. Each lesson in the scheme can begin with a brief detective training session with Inspector Casey, where the children have the opportunity to practise/rehearse skills needed in the drama.

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Resource A: Traffic Light



Resource B: Police Officer Directing Traffic



Resource C: Coloured Circles and Arrows

