

Using written texts

Sometimes a drama class begins with a close examination of a written text. The literacy levels in the class will partly determine the choice of text type, and how it is used. In Early Stage 1 the class may begin with the spoken word, (for example the reading of a picture book or nursery rhyme) whilst older more experienced students could base their drama on poems, short stories or extracts from the newspaper. Picture books, where communication depends on the combination of picture and words, may be used in younger classes. In Stage 3 a play script might be explored.

	Using stories leading to performances
Early Stage 1	Read <i>Mary had a little lamb</i> . Using teacher in role, create a spontaneous whole class process drama about school. The teacher adopts a low status role as Mary, and questions the students (in role as more experienced schoolgoers) about why it is wrong to bring a lamb to school. They could "help" her decide how to cope with the lamb at school until Mary's mother can come to collect the lamb at the end of the day. <i>Where can it stay? What could it eat? How can we keep it quiet?</i>
Stage 1	Read Steven Kellog's "Chicken Little", and explore with the class soundscaping to lift the story off the page. Students can add musical instruments to represent the helicopter crashing, or body percussion for the falling acorn. They can use voice to interpret the characters' emotions. The teacher can conduct an interpretive reading.
Stage 2	Students can create a readers' theatre script from a text such as the <i>Three Billy Goats Gruff</i> , using differently pitched voices for the goats and the troll, and placing their scripts in folders of different symbolic sizes and colours as they begin to interpret the characters.(eg the troll's script is in a large dark coloured folder; the littlest goat has a small light coloured one).
Stage 3	Compare sections of the novel <i>Hating Alison Ashley</i> by Robin Klein and the play text of the same name, adapted by Richard Tulloch. Read Chapter 3, and then explore Scene 2 <i>The School Classroom</i> . Discuss the differences in the text types but similarities in story. Have the students in groups of about six, interpret and prepare for presentation small sections of this scene. As this preparation is time consuming, give each group only about half a page. When they are ready, run the prepared sections in chronological order, as one piece.