



A new drama and literacy project by Patrice Baldwin offers opportunities for a range of learning styles.

'Each child has a spark in him/her. It is the responsibility of the people and institutions around each child to find what would ignite that spark'. Howard Gardner, quoted in the DfEE's *All Our Futures: creativity, culture and education*

The rigid way in which many schools are structuring their teaching of literacy since the introduction of the literacy hour may be seen as restricting teachers' presentational styles and children's learning styles. In time, this could result in predictable patterns of response from children, as well as in disaffected and bored teachers and pupils. The NLS videos demonstrate a very limited range of teaching and learning styles which are mostly suited to particular types of learner. Their approaches seem out of step with developments in learning theory.

Children learn in a variety of ways. Some are mainly visually orientated learners who respond most readily to the written word and visual images; others are more auditorily orientated, and the spoken word and sound generally have a greater impact on their learning. There are also children who are kinaesthetically orientated and learn best through movement and through more tactile, emotional teaching.

The NLS videos have done very little to offer models of teaching that support this last category of learner. The videos contain many examples of children, some very young, sitting still and appearing to listen for relatively long periods of time. These children have few opportunities to move, interact freely with the teacher or their peers, respond emotionally, or even to speak, other than through formal question-and-answer sessions. Opportunities for the children to have ownership of their learning, to learn actively or independently, are limited.

Many teachers are reluctantly emulating the NLS video teaching style, even though this provides a preferred and most effective learning style for only a section of their pupils. It could be argued that this approach limits equality of learning opportunity, since kinaesthetic learners are disadvantaged. It also seems possible that it could disadvantage boys. Anne and Bill Moir, authors of *Why Men Don't Iron*

(quoted in Shaw and Hawes's *Effective Teaching and Learning in the Primary Classroom*) refer to the 'feminisation' of the classroom where the emphasis is on sustained reading- and writing-based activities. Male and female brains have key differences, with the female brain having a larger area for linguistic processing. Girls tend to be better with words and more efficient listeners. Boys seem to require other types of stimulation to engage their attention.

We also know that dramatic play is an important feature of children's early development. It seems likely that active teaching and learning styles such as those employed in drama work are more likely to motivate a wide cross section of pupils, as they frequently use all three representational systems of learning: visual (images), auditory (sounds) and kinaesthetic (feelings.)

The most effective learning style for a child varies from individual to individual. No two brains are the same: each has its own mental map of interconnecting neural pathways which have been developed and extended from an early age. Dr Howard Gardner has developed the theory of multiple intelligence. He suggests that there are seven areas of intelligence:

- ◆ linguistic (adept with words, spoken or written)
- ◆ visual spatial (can visualise mental images internally)
- ◆ logical mathematical (can solve problems logically)
- ◆ bodily kinaesthetic (has good bodily movement control)
- ◆ musical (can translate sound into pattern and rhythm)
- ◆ interpersonal (can empathise with and influence others)
- ◆ intrapersonal (can reflect, self evaluate and think philosophically).

It has been suggested that 70% of the content of the National Curriculum is linked to the first two areas of intelligence. However, when it comes to teaching styles, although teachers cannot realistically offer individualised styles for each learner in a class, they can offer whole-class presentational styles that enable greater numbers of children to access the teaching more readily and apply and interconnect a multiplicity of intelligences.

Teaching through the medium of drama often requires, or gives an opportunity for, pupils to apply a wider range of intelligences to the learning situation. And drama is a powerful medium for the teaching of literacy.

- ◆ Drama provides emotionally linked learning. Lessons with emotional contents and contexts are retained more readily. This is because when the emotions are engaged, neural connections within the brain are more easily made and the existing neural pathways are strengthened.
- ◆ Drama lessons often require children to employ visualisation, to explore and create visual images linked to text (freeze-frame/still image/tableaux). Visualisation aids long-term learning and recall, and facilitates the making of creative connections.
- ◆ Drama provides forms through which children's personal and interpersonal collective responses to literature can be explored, communicated and expressed. It provides a multi-sensory art form through which children can respond to text in ways other than by writing or discussion.

Building in multi-sensory approaches to text

When I plan text level work, I try consciously, to seek ways of structuring multi-sensory opportunities for exploring the words and images within the text. These opportunities enable children to create movement, still images, sound and speech, to respond and communicate their individual and collective personal responses verbally, visually and kinaesthetically. One project in which I have applied these 'brain friendly' approaches to teaching is centred on 'The Lady of Shalott', the classic narrative poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

What follows is a description of a series of drama-based activities that I have used to approach the teaching of NLS Year 5, Term 2 objectives with two different mixed-age classes of Y5 and Y6 children during literacy lessons. I make no apology for ignoring the literacy clock! I have gathered and sequenced the activities according to my own plan, and readers can select and try those that suit them.

The NLS objectives for Year 5, Term 2 state that the range of literature should include: '(i) Traditional stories, myths and legends, fables from a range of cultures (ii) longer classic poetry including narrative poetry'.

Year 5 Term 2, text level work

Fiction and poetry

Reading comprehension

- ◆ to investigate different versions of the same story in print or on film, identifying similarities and differences
- ◆ recognise differences of culture and place that are expressed in stories
- ◆ to investigate similarities and differences between oral and written storytelling;
- ◆ to read a range of narrative poems;
- ◆ to perform poems in a variety of ways;
- ◆ to understand terms which describe different types of poems e.g. narrative poem and to identify typical features; to distinguish between the author and the narrator, investigating narrative viewpoint and the treatment of different characters e.g. minor characters, heroes, villains, and perspectives on the action from different characters;
- ◆ to understand the differences between literal and figurative language;

Non fiction

Reading comprehension

make notes of story outline as preparation for oral storytelling.

Coverage of the NLS

Reference to the NLS teaching objectives for Year 5 Term 2 shows that the activities described above can support and develop the teaching of these objectives within an engaging learning context.

The children I taught have 'played the text', explored the language, characters, setting and plot, and committed the poem to their memories in a variety of brain-friendly ways. I feel sure that, having worked together to bring to life a classic of English literature, my pupils are likely to have developed a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the poem than they would have done if I had taught with strict observance of video training materials and literacy clocks. I also know that both they and I had a lot more fun!

Patrice Baldwin is Head of Tunstead Primary School in Norfolk. She is Primary Standing Chair of National Drama and consultant for BBC Schools Radio's 'Let's Make a Story' series. Her publications include *The Drama Book* (Collins Educational), with Lesley Hendy, and *Stimulating Drama* (National Drama). She acknowledges the contributions to her work of Trevor Hawes (learning consultant), Ken Robinson (University of Warwick), Luke Abbott (Essex CC Learning Services) and Helen Nicholson (Homerton College), and thanks Kate Fleming (Brighton University) for advice on this article.

References

DfEE, 1998, *The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching*, DfEE Publications; DfEE, 1999, *All Our Futures: creativity, culture and education*, DfEE Publications; Shaw S and Hawes T, 1998, *Effective Teaching and Learning in the Primary Classroom*, The Services Ltd. Leicester; Alfred Lord Tennyson and Charles Keeping, 1986, *The Lady of Shalott*, Oxford University Press

Teacher Resources

<http://www.webmagick.co.uk> offers the text of 'The Lady of Shalott' and paintings of the subject by famous artists. The Tate Gallery sells postcards, posters and a slide of the John William Waterhouse painting 'The Lady of Shalott' (1888) and has an 'on line' ordering service. <http://www.tate.org.uk/home/index.htm>

Part 1 — Outside the Tower

Before you start, you may, if you wish, play medieval lute music to provide atmosphere.

1. Tell the children that you will be exploring together a poem that is set in the time of King Arthur. It was written in Victorian times, and it is a story poem. Introduce or revise the term 'narrative poem' and you could talk briefly about the poet.
2. Tell the children that the poem is in parts, and that the first part describes the landscape where the story is set. Ask them to close their eyes as you read Part 1 and to try to visualise the place in their minds, as if they are there (**engaging with the fiction and role**).
3. Read Part 1 aloud.
4. Ask the children to describe what they saw in their mind's eye, and then ask them to look at their copy of the text and underline with a partner references to things that would be 'seen', e.g. 'long fields of barley and of rye', 'Four grey walls and four grey towers' etc. (**nouns/visual image**).
5. Invite the children to read Part 1 with you. You may wish to explain unfamiliar vocabulary before they do so.
6. Ask the children to close their eyes again, and this time invite them in turn to say aloud what they can see, as if they were there, and to describe what they see using their own words (**engaging with role**). Ritually, each contribution begins with, 'I can see ...', for example, 'I can see a tall grey tower. The walls are covered in moss and damp'. Children used to this strategy are better able to not interrupt each other, but you can touch the children's shoulders lightly in turn to signal their opportunity to speak. You can use medieval background music.
7. You might decide to focus on particular aspects of the setting in turn, with several children speaking as if they are there and adding to an emerging, collectively agreed description of the imagined setting. Any contributions are accepted, as long as they do not directly contradict the text. This activity can be done sitting at desks or with the children positioning themselves within a drama space.
8. Ask the children what the text tells them about the Lady of Shalott so far. Help them to differentiate between what they know (**reference**) about her and what they think they know (**inference**). List their collective suggestions.
9. Ask the children what they want to know (**inquiry**) about the Lady at this point, and gather their questions together, in written form if you wish. How might they find out more about her? They can read on ... but first tell them we want to find out a bit about her from the reapers referred to in Part 1 of the poem.
10. Ask the children to imagine that they are the reapers (**role play**). The version of the poem illustrated by Charles Keeping and published by Oxford University Press has a powerful and atmospheric picture that you could use to help children engage with their roles. Ask them to make themselves into a still picture as reapers in the moonlight (**still image**). Read the verse aloud to them as they physically hold the image for a few seconds.
11. Ask what job-related problems the reapers might have as they work. Tell them that in a moment they will re-form the image of the reapers and at a given signal (which could be medieval music if you are using it) they will bring the scene to life in slow motion (**controlled movement**), using exaggerated movements. You can ask them to suggest movements first, if they are not used to working in this way, so that they support each other with ideas.
12. Repeat the activity but tell the children that this time you are introducing a signal which will indicate that they can suddenly hear the lady singing. They will be focusing on a key moment. They will freeze at this signal (**freeze frame**). Your active participation adds status to the make believe. If you feel brave enough, you could sing as the lady yourself (**teacher in role**).
13. Tell the children that they will work as reapers one more time, but this time you will join them in role as a reaper who is new to the area (**teacher in role**). You will move around asking them questions about the lady in the tower, e.g. 'Who is she?' 'Have you seen her?' 'Does anyone live with her?' The questions will include the children's (see Activity 9) and they will now, in role, be guessing to provide some answers.
14. Rumours! The children have one minute as gossipy reapers/villagers to invent and gather rumours about the Lady of Shalott (**drama game**). You can refer back to the text with them to differentiate between those rumours that are text based and those that are not. You can sort the rumours according to the probability of each being true.
15. If you have the version of the poem referred to above, show the children Charles Keeping's picture of the tower at night. The Lady's room has a light. Ask the children to speak the reapers' thoughts as they look up at the window (**thought-tracking**). It is ideal if you can project the image onto a wall.



Part 2 — Inside & Outside the Tower

1. Read Part 2 of the poem. This is set inside the Lady of Shalott's room. Check that the children understand the storyline and the less familiar vocabulary e.g. 'surlly village churls', 'an abbot on an ambling pad' etc.
2. Hand out strips of paper with sections of printed text on them to different groups of children. Each section refers to a scene the Lady sees reflected in her mirror, e.g. 'a troop of damsels glad' and 'the knights come riding two by two' etc. The children can also write lines of their own to describe images the Lady might have seen (**scriptwriting**).
3. Give the children a little rehearsal time to create a short scene depicting their group's image (**improvisation/ play-making**). Each group should start from a still image and end with one, reinforcing the idea of tapestry images. Tell the children that you will walk slowly between the groups, saying their allocated lines of the text as an introduction to their performance (alternatively, activate each group performance with the quote 'I am half-sick of shadows'). The other groups will watch as audience. There should be no comments until every group has performed.
4. Make a cross-curricular link with art. The children, individually or in pairs, create a paper weaving, painting one scene on the strands that form the warp and another on the weft. They then pull the strands a little to distort the intertwined images. Magazine images of a lady can also be cut up and used in this way. (I devised this linked activity when one class was studying fabrics in art at the time.)
5. Ask the children what they know, from the text, is inside the Lady's room. Ask them also to suggest what else might be there e.g. candle, Bible, hair brush. Each child in turn is then invited to enter the drama space, which represents the Lady's room, as any object other than the mirror, placing themselves appropriately and stating what they are (**role play/still image**). They can also add a sentence about themselves and the Lady, e.g. 'I am her loom. Every day she sits near me for hours'.
6. Tell the children that for a limited time you will be the mirror (**teacher in role**). They will now go out of role and may ask you one question each (**hotseating**), which you will answer in role if you can, using your knowledge of the text. You may decide that you can tell the future. When you are once again out of role, you may wish to refer back to the text and make explicit what is text based.



Part 3 — Sir Lancelot appears

1. Read Part 3 to the children and then with them.
2. Divide the class into paired groups. Group 1 is a 'sound group' and Group 2 is a 'movement group'. Ask the sound groups to go through Part 3 underlining the direct or implied references to sound, e.g. 'And as he rode his armour rung' and 'The mirror cracked.' Ask the movement group to go through and under line text that refers to or implies movement, e.g. 'She left the loom' and 'Out flew the web'.
3. Ask the sound groups to create either a **sound collage** or a sequence of sounds as a soundtrack to accompany Part 3. Ask the movement group to create a **movement sequence** or a **dance sequence** that follows their underlined references.
4. Now ask the groups to pair up and perform their work for each other before working together to negotiate an **integrated performance** incorporating aspects of both groups' work.
5. Make sure that the children recognise the key moment when the curse is activated. Ask them to consider whether the Lady of Shalott made a conscious or unconscious decision to look directly out of the window. To help them decide, ask them to form two long lines facing each other. Tell them that this represents the pathway that the Lady followed from the mirror to the window.
6. Tell the children that you are going to move slowly between the lines as the Lady (**teacher in role**) and they will be the contradictory voices/thoughts that could have been in her head as she moved towards the window. As you pass by, the members of one line will try and persuade you to look out of the window and the other line will try to stop you (**conscience alley**). Nobody may touch you. Then, still in role as the Lady, retrace your steps away from the window, back between the lines. This time, the children in the lines can speak the thoughts of the Lady as she returns, cursed (**thought tracking**).
7. To represent an unconscious decision by the Lady, replay the scene fast so that you do not hear or listen to the voices, rushing to the window and finishing with 'The curse has come upon me.'
8. Ask the children which way they think the scene should be played to best reflect the text? Can they justify their choice? They can then jointly direct you, possibly through example, as to how they think the scene should be played, (**forum theatre**).
9. The scene can be played, according to the children's direction, with the children reassuming their roles as objects in the Lady's room (see Part 2, Activity 5). They can recreate the room, and as you move towards the window they can each in turn add to a commentary on the action

10. With you in role as the Lady, invite the children to question you about this moment in the story (**teacher in role/hotseating**). You can agree on a list of questions first and restrict the number she will answer. Discuss with the children which questions are open and likely to elicit a fuller response from the Lady.
11. Homework. Ask the children to draw a cracked mirror with sections. Inside each section they should write the thoughts of the Lady of Shalott at the moment the mirror cracked (**thought tracking**).

Part 4 — The death of the Lady

1. Read Part 4 to, and then with, the children. Check that they understand the sequence of the actions of the Lady of Shalott in Part 4. List her actions together.
2. Revisit the text and ask the children to consider the words Tennyson has used to describe the scene. Ask them to suggest how he has helped us to imagine with our senses. Ask them to get into small groups and, with different coloured crayons (one for each sense), to underline the words and phrases that appeal to the senses e.g. floated, singing, wind, noises of the night.
3. Ask the children in their groups to choose one line from each part of the poem and to keep the sense of the line but to elaborate on it, substituting words if they wish and adding others.
4. Show the children the John William Waterhouse painting (see p.15) of 'The Lady of Shalott' (postcard, slide or poster available from the Tate Gallery.) Ask them to consider which aspects of the painting (1888) directly refer to the text of Tennyson's poem.
5. Ask the children to form two long lines a few metres apart. The space between the lines represents the river and the lines can sway to suggest the movement of the plants in the wind and the water flowing. With you in role as the Lady (**teacher in role**), silently enact her final actions in order (**mime**). Ask the children to read aloud their newly created lines as you pass slowly along the river. This is a form of **reflection**.
The same activity can be done more simply using lines the children select from the poem, or with them thinking aloud as the Lady of Shalott passes. Background medieval music can add atmosphere.
6. The Lady of Shalott sings her last song. In groups, the children can create that 'mourned, holy' song. These songs can be performed and one selected as a background to the next activity.
7. Show the children the Charles Keeping illustration of the townspeople on the wharf looking at the dead body floating past. Alternatively, ask them to imagine the scene. Define where the wharf and boat are and then invite the children one at a time to enter the drama space and place themselves in a still picture entitled 'Who is this and what is here?' (**still image**). Music can accompany this.
8. Maintain the still image and ask the children to speak their thoughts in turn as they gaze upon the Lady (**thought tracking**). Then, you enter as Sir Lancelot (**teacher in role**) and say
'She has a lovely face;
God in His mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'
9. Ask the children to suggest how the townspeople could commemorate the Lady of Shalott. For example, they could create epitaphs, write her tombstone inscription, her obituary, paint her etc.

