

Developing Literary Analysis

Extracts of exercises created by Paul Bunyan and Ruth Moore for the Critical Scripts edition of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.

These are edited extracts of exercises aimed at Secondary pupils, and are part of a longer scheme of work that accompanies the play script. They appear here with kind permission of Methuen Drama.

Drama approaches to literary analysis can enable learners to visualise, physicalise and articulate complex ideas and concepts in response to texts, and extend their reading and writing skills.

In advance, prepare these resources:

Word cards with the following words written or printed on them. Line-breaks are offered here as a suggestion for how to separate the words on the page:

The word metaphor means carrying something from one place to another and it is when you describe something by using a word for something that it isn't.

I don't like acting because it is pretending that something is real when it is not really real at all so it is like a kind of lie.

Prepare the quotations from the play and put them around your working space:

**I promise
Do you know that it is wrong to lie
If you don't tell the truth now, then later on it hurts even more
864 x 251
157, 163, 167, 173, 17
Show that a triangle with sides that can be written in the form $n^2 + 1$, $n^2 - 1$ and $2n$ (where n is greater than 1) is right-angled.
Playwright
Audience
Writer**

If you are not using the Methuen Drama version of the play script to work from, identify the corresponding sections at the opening of the play to these below:

Extract 1 (Pages 3-4)

From The start of the play
To Christopher looks at the Policeman

Extract 2 (Pages 4-6)

From I do not tell lies

To And it can also mean 'I think what you just said was very stupid'.

Extract 3 (Pages 6-8)

From Could you take your laces out of your shoes please, Christopher?

To Right. Lovely. Do you know your father's phone number, Christopher?

Extract 4 (pages 8-10)

From Christopher turns to Ed. Ed looks at him.

To Do you understand what I'm saying? Yes.

Extract 5 (Pages 10-12)

From The second main reason is that people often talk using metaphors.

To Yes, Christopher, you could say that. You could very well say that.

Extract 6 (Pages 12-14)

From Siobhan reads more from the book.

To If I make her a get-well card will you take it in for her tomorrow?

Extract 7 (Pages 14-15)

From How are you today, Christopher?

To I don't know.

Extract 8 (Pages 15-16)

From Christopher, if your father's told you not to do something maybe you shouldn't do it.

To If you don't go now, I will call the police again.

Lay the word cards out in random order on the floor of your working space in two separate circles

The whole group (divided in half) sits in two larger circles surrounding the circles of word cards, they should read out all of the words on their circle of cards and negotiate the order that the words might go in so that they make sense as one quotation.

Discuss what the quotations might mean and why they might be important to the text.



Consider what aspects of the two quotations might overlap – is there a Venn diagram that can be created from any words or ideas from the quotations? Consider why this might be.

Discuss these quotations in the context of the other quotes and numbers around the room – consider why a playwright might focus on the use of metaphors, pretence and lies to convey ideas to the audience.

Put the group into smaller groups of between 2-5 people and give each group an extract from the opening of the play.

Task each group with creating an 'Action Reading' of their section of the script. This should start with a still image, come to life with some actions as the words are spoken and end with a still image.

After about 15-minutes, ask the groups to arrange themselves in order around your working space and you will aim to create a piece of 'Rolling Theatre' whereby groups will perform their section one after the other, thereby creating the opening section of the play.

Reflect on the scenes you have just presented and observed, think about the structure of the play and the devices the playwright has used.

How do you ensure smooth transitions between and within the different extracts when the action moves from one scene to another or where Siobhan's reading provides a character's voice?

What techniques could you add to ensure the audience understand what is happening?

Discuss this within your group and with the groups either side of your extract.

As a whole group, re-run the Rolling Theatre adding the techniques/devices you have discussed.

Reflect on whether this activity gave you insight to the significance of the scenes or the introduction to audiences of different characters.

Consider Siobhan's role – how do you think this relates to decisions the playwright made when adapting the novel into a play?

Discuss what is understood by Truth and how this is explored in the opening scenes.

What attitude does the audience have towards the characters at this stage of the play and what ideas do they expect to be explored throughout the play? Why?

Preparing for written analytical responses, analyse how the language devices and techniques are used to explore: Characters, Relationships, Tension, A sense of voice.

