The drama of history

The drama of history

an experiment in co-operative teaching

by

JOHN FINES & RAYMOND VERRIER

NEW UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

FIRST PUBLISHED 1974 BY NEW UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
A REGISTERED IMPRINT OF CLIVE BINGLEY LTD
16 PEMBRIDGE ROAD LONDON W11
SET IN 10 ON 12 POINT LINOTYPE TIMES ROMAN
AND PRINTED IN THE UK BY THE CENTRAL PRESS (ABERDEEN) LTD

0 85157 512 9

FOR DOROTHY, WHO TAUGHT US MORE THAN WE HAVE YET LEARNED

Contents

Introduction

THIS BOOK IS the result of a teaching partnership which might have been difficult to predict some years ago. When John Fines, an academic historian committed to the improvement of the teaching of his subject, was at Bulmershe College he drifted into a lecture there by a noted drama teacher, Mrs Dorothy Heathcote. Like members of her audiences the world over he was captivated by her drive and inspired commonsense, and begged to know whether any of her students taught history by her methods. She gave him an address in Bristol, and shortly afterwards he was privileged to meet Ray Verrier and watch him teach. Though utterly dissimilar in personality and background, they at once planned to work together, and during the last few years they have shared many different classrooms. They have taught naughty juniors and good secondary children, clever small ones and less able big ones. They have argued with each other, planned and schemed, written reports and gone back to teach again. There have been successes, and some resounding catastrophes and, although the successes have given them great pleasure, the mistakes have taught them more. They have learned in action, from children and from each other, and now they present an action report of their work, in the hope that it may help others less privileged who have to struggle in teaching on their own. If what they have to say sounds banal and trite, then they can only reply that they had to learn banal and trite lessons to improve their teaching, and, if nothing more, teachers will enjoy many a wry smile as they read of the fumbled catches, missed chances and humiliating defeats they encountered on their way.

Our debt to Dorothy Heathcote will be embarrassingly clear to all readers who know her work; we would also like to thank Gavin Bolton and Robin MacGibbon for shooting down some ideas and setting up many more in their place; to the many schools we have worked in during the past three years we express sincere and very warm thanks for their kindness and generosity and, though there

are too many to name separately, we would give special thanks to the headmaster, staff and pupils of Clanfield County Primary School where so much of our work has been done in such a friendly environment.

March 1974 JOHN FINES AND RAYMOND VERRIER

CHAPTER ONE

A warning

WE HAVE OFTEN picked up books in shops whose titles promised much—a guide to this or that, or how to do the other; their introductions have led us to believe in the competency of the author, and the extent of his coverage, and blurbs and recommendations have backed it all up. It is only at home, in the armchair, that the let-down comes, when one finds that this book was not really written for my purpose, or his, but is merely a general account, and touching in depth on areas just outside the field of interest. Hence we are writing this chapter, a dire warning to all our readers, to say as clearly as we can, what this book is *not* about.

A book by a specialist historian and a drama specialist about teaching might be held to be a manual for history teachers and drama teachers keen to improve their own specialist teaching areas. (The meaning of the term 'drama specialist', as applied here to Ray, needs some explanation as it is not so immediately obvious as the term 'history specialist'. Quite properly there are many different ways of teaching drama. As it will become clear to the reader later on in the book, the drama specialist of this book was concerned with helping pupils understand themselves and the world they live in through setting up learning situations that could be explored through role-play methods. He taught no lessons which were labelled on the time table as DRAMA. However his lessons which were labelled ENGLISH or HISTORY usually involved learning situations in which role-play methods played a large part.)

We must advise all such to put their money back into their wallets and sadly leave the shop, for our experience has led us to reject our specialisms, not to reinforce them. John has had to put away content and his deep respect for inviolate truthful facts, and Ray has had to spend long hours of reading and research, building for himself an armoury of facts.

A paradox, no doubt, but as the book progresses the reader will find this to be a truism. Let us illustrate: when first John saw Ray in action the work was about Luther, and he purred with delight, for Luther was a favourite of his, and he was glad to see children paying such careful and serious-minded attention to this amiable and important man. The lesson progressed, and the children grew very interested in what Luther left behind when he left the Augustinian Canons; whilst the future was interesting—pregnant with events, as the historian might put it—the children felt concerned with leaving things, with what happened to those left behind by history. For the children knew that such people went on feeling and acting, and they knew also that the great ones could never shake off the memory of their time with ordinary folk. So they set up a scene in which Luther returned to his ' monastery '—John shuddered, knowing that it was all untrue and therefore ' wrong '—and began to think how the brothers might receive him. They worked hard to discover the right touch—how to remain charitable (as ' monks ' should) and at the same time show their erring brother the error of his ways. Eventually these rough and not very bright children hit on a solution: they would pray with him, and show by their prayers that they didn't approve.

It is impossible to describe the praying competition that then ensued, with the children arguing vociferously but sensibly as to whether ' O God ' was better than ' Our Dear Lord ' as a beginning, but suffice it to say that the historian was much moved by what the children were learning in this lesson, and by the great skill of their teacher, and horribly disturbed at the implications of ' untruthfulness '.

Equally the drama teacher has had his problems; alone in the classroom he could concentrate on an imaginary reconstruction of the scene in the market square as people with a range of different interests in Galileo gather to express their attitudes to his work on the day of the famous experiment from the tower of Pisa. Since he has worked with the historian he has come to see how much more interesting Galileo might be, if one only knew more about him, and how complex a matter it is to be honest about a lie told hundreds of years ago. The knowledge that comes from the market place, what we call instinctive knowledge, is a great thing indeed, but when it is informed and instructed scientifically then the many strands of its web coruscate.

So we are talking of something very different indeed from specialists at work in their own area employing a few techniques carefully selected and adapted from another. Indeed we are not even talking of an amalgam of the two, for we have seen enough of bastard products in education to think that these might work—a little of this and a little of that usually add up to the virtues of neither and the vices of both. Instead we are recommending an attitude to education that teachers of different disciplines may share usefully.

For it is the attitude of the teacher towards the task in hand that really conditions the teaching process, not the content, nor the method or chosen activity. A teacher may take our content and teach in a way that would horrify us, and similarly he might operate the technical elements of our method, by the book, as it were, without in any way sharing in the kind of teaching we are recommending. We have often seen this happen with students and teachers who have heard us speak and watched us teach; they have been genuinely economical with materials, they have engaged in slow and precise discussion with children, and they chose a moment when the lesson should go into the hands of the children; but throughout they were trying to do something quite different in teaching from what we aim to do.

To describe the attitude we are after is no easy matter, and we shall have done well if we have conveyed something of it by the end of this book. At this stage we can only present a summary in warning to the reader who might discover at this stage that it is not his or her attitude, that it is a kind of teaching so alien that it cannot be helpful.

Thus the first constituent is a genuine desire on the part of the teacher for children to participate fully in the learning. Now most readers might nod their heads liberally at this statement and dash on to the next, but let us pause to examine some implications first. We mean that we value children's statements in our lessons more than our own; that if children move in a new direction, then we follow, discarding all our hours of careful planning; it means according to children's statements and actions full value, whatever the intentions that underlay such statements and actions—that is, facing a child who is trying hard to wreck what is going on and taking his or her contribution as a real and serious part of the action. It isn't easy.

Secondly, the attitude involves more utilisation of the children's knowledge than of the teacher's. Our experience has shown us that there is a very strict limit to the amount of novel ideas and information that children can take in our lessons; often we have confused the issue absolutely by putting in far too much from our own experience and knowledge. One lesson we shall not forget easily is a good example of this: we had a class of top juniors whom we believed to have worked on too theoretical, too arid a level with us in previous weeks, and so we planned a romp. The school was close to the track Charles II took in escaping after the battle of Worcester and, although there is no record of him having stopped there, there were many sequestrations of royalist property in the village after the battle. We had been exploring a sixteenth-century house in the village so, all in all, conditions seemed ideal for 'doing' Charles II. John told a story of the escape after Worcester and brought Charles, tired and weary, to the hill over the school. Looking down, the small party considered whether they dared go down to rest a while.

We then split into two groups, villagers and the royal party, to explore the issues. It was unmitigated disaster. The children were restless and seemed devoid of ideas. The more hopeless the situation became the more ideas the two teachers put before the children—why not hold a wedding in the village? Why not send a party down to explore? It grew worse and worse, and we thank the children for their generosity in accepting us back the following week—we both felt on probation!

We had imposed a plethora of ideas, and a surplus of information on the children, we had drawn nothing from them, learnt nothing from them and their own experience. No wonder the children sat back and tacitly urged us to get on with it: so we had a lot to tell them—so they would sit and listen; but there was no place for them other than as passive listeners.

The third element in the attitude is the willingness to slow down the action sufficiently for the children to find what they need to build a play. When we engage in drama with children we are not theatre directors working with highly trained actors, though often we find children whose inner resources are so powerful that they will produce marvels of sensitivity and finesse. The successes often delude us into thinking that all children have this power, that it may be turned on (and perhaps more significantly) turned off at

will. The average class, however, needs to collect its things before entering on drama, just as it needs to collect its things before entering the world of mathematical action. The things are different —not compasses, but ideas; not protractors but special language; not set squares but understanding of the roles of others, and their implications for oneself; not text books, but some necessary props —some facts, some feelings, some objects, some gestures. And these need time to collect, and great patience on the part of a teacher who must understand that they must be searched for, discovered and examined, and sometimes made to fit an individual.

Finally the attitude requires that true learning consists in thinking, that thinking consists in trying to feel what life-situations are like, and that the result is an inward knowledge that may be tested in use, and not in answering closed questions. The use that a child makes of this learning comes in life at large, and is in no way bounded by school; thus the teacher is involved in a total act of faith, and one far greater than is made in suggesting that French or chemistry may be useful. For there are no rules, no guidelines, no examination results by which one may organise and evaluate one's teaching.

To drive children to think and feel in an open situation, where the aim is merely to prepare for living, puts a teacher very severely on the spot. His decisions matter enormously, and if he is wrong he has hopelessly wasted children's time—they will have gained nothing; on the other hand there is always the chance that the French or the chemistry, faithfully taught and obediently learned, *may* be of use to some member of the class.

Let us be quite clear here: there is a sharp and insurmountable division between the kind of teaching we are suggesting and the teaching of single disciplines. If a history teacher is afraid about the children getting the facts ' wrong ' in history, as John was when he observed Ray's lesson on Luther, then he is not in any way prepared to teach with the drama teacher! A long road must be walked before a new teaching style may be achieved. In fact a whole new educational philosophy needs building, and the cost must be counted.

For many teachers we have spoken to have believed in short cuts, assuming that an academic can change his teaching style by learning dramatic technique—improving his voice, concentrating on gesture, and learning how to use space effectively. There are

some values in such learning, as we shall indicate, and there are values in the drama teacher learning to respect the power of disciplined thought and careful research as we have already suggested; but if the attitude to what goes on in learning has not changed, if the teacher has not re-examined his own role in the classroom (and much more important, the role of the children) then the effort will have been useless.

Thus this book is no manual for worried history teachers and interested drama specialists—we could not in all honesty take their money, for we know that the book would have been little use to us before we began to teach together. What we are aiming at is the teacher who feels radically concerned about his whole teaching style, and about the present educational system, whether he is a mathematician, artist or woodworker. For our writing has grown from a sad recognition that our teaching ideals, whilst admired and flattered by many, do not fit comfortably into the present school structure.

This is not to suggest any despisal of teachers at work in school, nor is it a counsel of despair, otherwise we would not be writing; but what we see going on in education today is sad, and could lead to despair if things do not change. Teachers mugging up facts they never knew before, and could not think of a use for, going into lessons to exert a terrible willpower to force children to learn them, and meeting a frightening opposition; when we meet teachers who are frightened of their children we do not see them as failures, weak or feckless, but commend their sharp eyes and clear vision, their ability to face facts.

For children in an age of sophistication, when class-barriers and convention are crumbling, will not accept the imposition of outdated educational ideas. They will question, will ask what their learning is for, will challenge those who do not know or haven't thought about it. They will continue to ask for their educational rights, and for a quality of concern and caring that is not to be found in the obedient exam-pedlars and syllabus worshippers who ruled comfortably in days gone by. In a world where everything is new, where revolution and the whirl of fashion rule through media of unparalleled power, then education must renew itself.

We have tried to find new ways for ourselves, and have had some satisfaction, learned also how little we can do. In this book we present a record of a small journey, in the hope that other teachers

making similar efforts may give us a few compass bearings too; for the greatest joy in our experience has been the discovery that children, however hostile to the old and outmoded, greet genuine attempts at reconstruction with a warmth and generosity one could scarcely have dared to expect.

CHAPTER TWO

Getting started

BEGINNING ANY NEW activity involves extensive consideration and preparation, especially in teaching where there are two main parties to take into account, one of which has thirty to forty highly individual parts.

The first major decision is, of course, whether to use drama at all, whether it is relevant to the present situation, whether it will do what the teacher wants. The answer is often no, and even when it is right it is the very worst kind of folly to rush in and try to create drama in a class that hasn't been prepared for it, and without a great deal of thought on the teacher's part. In such circumstances the teacher is too excitable to be observant and the children too confused to act rationally or even be themselves. The teacher tries to 'bump' the children into drama, making little rushes at them, and they sensibly either dig in their heels, or riot; soon the teacher is lost, and because he is over-excited himself begins to accuse the children of non-cooperation, of foolishness, ingratitude, and they on their part grow sulky and withdrawn at such treatment.

To avoid such a fate it is worth taking the necessary preliminary measures, and it seems to us that there are four stages in this planning (though we recognise from our own failures that planning is itself a highly individual activity and not a subject for pontification!) The stages we generally go through are: taking observations of the class; preparing ourselves; preparing the tools; and deciding on how to start the lesson itself.

The order of these stages is quite significant for us. Long ago, when the historian was merely a history teacher, he would have put the third stage in first priority, arguing that what the children were to learn was the object of the lesson and therefore the most important part of the planning. Certainly he would take into account the children's stage of development in deciding what they

would learn next, but the prime consideration remained the material: what should come next.

The rejection of content as a governing factor in lesson design comes hard to anyone with an academic background and a commitment to a discipline. Yet it has proved necessary for us to reject content in this way, though, as will be seen in the final example in this book, content may bulk very large indeed as a result of planning decisions taken in the manner described. The difference is that we did not start out saying 'We will teach them all about the court of Henry VIII', but we ended up having to, because that was the way lessons were taking us.

One is in the hands of the children in this sort of work, whilst retaining one's functions, duties and responsibilities as a teacher. The children's requirements dictate the circumstances of the lesson, and their actions dictate its progress; the teacher observes, guides, helps make it more real, more efficient and shapely, and adds necessary elements when asked for them. The children are the learners, then, and this gives them the key position; but this decision is not taken from any emotional or even philosophical standpoint—it is in fact as pragmatic as can be. Good drama can't be had in any other way.

A second point to emphasise before we look in detail at the four stages is that we are, in planning, looking only at the beginning of any lesson. The beginning is the most important part, as it governs the pace and tone of the lesson by deciding the level of commitment of all involved; if you begin well, there is a very fair chance of continuing well; but this is not the sole reason why we say that planning is only concerned with beginnings. Again it is practical, and searching for good drama: if a teacher over-plans, and bites too deep into a lesson (and that lesson's time, as will be seen in the example for this chapter) then there will be no room for the children, whose lesson it is. Perhaps a reader may reply 'well, there's no harm in planning the lot, just in case nothing happens, as a second string in case children don't take up the drama'. We would reply pretty firmly that there is a lot of harm. Teachers are economical souls, and if they have a plan in their heads the temptation to use more and more bits of it will be too strong to resist; for a teacher's plan looks so much more neat and interesting than what children produce, just as an art teacher's painting will *seem* much better than the child's. The circumstances are different, but

the message remains the same: the children must be allowed to do their own learning in drama as elsewhere, and so teachers must plan for no more than the opening stages of the lesson.

Let us look now at stage one, the observation taking stage. Here we are suggesting that a teacher should consider himself in all respects a spy, except that he is no enemy alien! There are so many things to look at in children's behaviour that the parallel with a spy is no bad one, and a teacher who plans without taking these observations is really planning in the dark, as if some foreign country were planning to influence its neighbour without any knowledge of that country; the only recourse there is total dominance supported by violence alone. Spies are necessary for good reasons as well as for bad ones.

It is important first of all to assess the mood of a class, its state of mind, the conscious or unconscious representation of its feelings. To take an extreme case a class that comes angry to your lesson, perhaps upset by the behaviour of a previous teacher, will be in no mood for anything but anger-revealing, and anger-relieving drama. Now a teacher who consciously checks on mood can also grow sufficiently sophisticated in checking to be able to assess the strength of that mood also. A class may come in noisy, violent, even abusive, giving apparently clear indications that it is in a vandal mood today; badly handled the class may well reinforce that mood and turn into a set of vandals for the time being. But it is possible that the strength of the mood was wrongly assessed: children will often play at this mood, either as a game, or as a tentative threat, to see what may happen; in effect their true feelings may be jovial, experimental and enquiring, looking for a laugh. In this case it will be clear that to misread the mood of a class can be fatal to planning good drama, and often the true reading comes only twenty seconds before you begin, for the mood is dynamic, and with it plans must change.

It all sounds very complicated and psychological, and this is not our intent: what we are suggesting is no mechanistic recording of a class, but a habit of mind on the part of the teacher which constantly prompts him to check the mood of the class, and to make subtle alterations to the direction of his teaching in order to meet the needs and pressures the mood expresses.

At the same time a host of other things must be observed. Can the class stick together as a whole, or are there strong groupings,

and some of these hostile? Is it possible for cooperation to take place between various individuals, between groups, between boys and girls? What are the feelings of the non-cooperators towards those who cooperate? These questions are all significant for the teacher engaged in planning, and must all be answered clearly as a result of observation; if they are not disasters can happen.

An example here comes to mind of a very sticky class who didn't want to cooperate at all, and made that quite clear: they distrusted the new teacher and the new ways profoundly, and were not willing to come, however short the distance, however patient and kindly the teacher. It looked like stalemate, when one small girl who really longed to engage in drama piped up—an act of great bravery, for she was immediately the centre of the class hostility, a traitor. Now had the teacher known in advance the relationship of the girl to the rest of the class he could have handled this situation easily. He did not, and decided to go in to support the girl, to protect her. This proved to be the worst thing he could have done—it compounded the treachery and repeated a pattern that had happened endless times before. In fact the girl's desire for drama was so strong that she could have borne different treatment, and the situation was one of great interest that could have been developed in such a way as to bring other children in.

This leads us to other aspects of observation: a teacher must check the capacity of his class for listening, for moving freely (rather than being restricted to desks), for teasing out problems, and checking and enlarging evidence, for preparing concise statements, for taking initiative. All these are skills regularly used in drama work, and they appear in different degrees in different children. A quiet child may happen to move well, and his skill is a major contribution; a class that jiffles wildly when it should be listening may be ideal researchers; a child who takes initiative may well lack other skills (possibly even reading—often the initiative taker in drama is less able in conventional school skills, though this is by no means a universal or even reliable finding!)

Thus a teacher will need to know in detail the strengths and weaknesses of his class so that in drama he may play upon the strengths and support and help to develop the weak areas. Yet, finally, it is not merely a matter of capacities, it is also one of interests, and a teacher must observe closely to find interests. This is most difficult, because a child simply asked its interests will

dutifully put up the shield of football and pop, a response that usually makes adults shut up and go away. In fact it is rarely true except at a very superficial level, and a child finds great difficulties in personalising its interests. In that confused and confusing struggle to find out 'who am I?' that makes up much of a schoolchild's life, the aid of a teacher in sorting out true interests from false, individual ones from general aping of the group, is priceless, and a major part of his job.

Having carefully examined the class's mood, group strength, capacities and interests, the teacher planning a lesson can turn (perhaps with a sigh of relief) to his own interests and concerns; for those devoted souls who look only to the needs of children and try in their teaching to deny themselves any demands at all are so often the tragic failures of the teaching profession. Whether we like it or not the teacher, in physical size alone, bulks large in the classroom and has to be considered; he or she is the director, the source of at least conventional wisdom, time keeper and final arbiter of conduct if not of taste. So clearly there is much consideration to be done in preparing this presence in the classroom.

If the drama is to work, then the teacher must be able to work, and his comfort is therefore at a premium: he has the right to make certain rules that will help him in his task. Now these differ from teacher to teacher, and from lesson to lesson, sometimes from task to task. One of the interesting questions to arise out of the teamwork on which this book is based is how do two teachers with different levels of comfort agree, with John demanding a more rigid control over discussions, yet happy to be on very close terms with children, whilst Ray was much looser in controlling discussion, and at the same time more distant.

It is very important indeed for a teacher to decide before he begins drama work just what sort of a person he is going to be in that work, and what rules he must lay down. It is simply not fair to children just to become a new person with a new set of rules and expect them to follow meekly. The teacher must know beforehand, and show and tell the children what he will be like, what they must do for him.

Further, the teacher must prepare himself for projecting a great deal of confidence and determination, and to be very clear indeed in expressing what is to be done. Of course all children need clear and confident teachers, but when they are engaged in new work

of this sort they need them much more. All too easily a child will give in when confused, and will declare the work to be 'stupid' or 'boring'. What he lacks at that moment is the eye of confidence that registers clearly that things are going well, that everything is allright and perfectly as expected; no one is making a fool of himself. This is a large and difficult role for a teacher who has many other things to do in drama, and it needs preparing for; a teacher must think out a face that expresses calmness and control when inside he may be panicking with the best of them. He must also think out forms of words that are clear and satisfying to use in drama; how do you stop a piece of drama and start a discussion of what has happened, for example? If you haven't thought about this and found a form of words that clearly indicates your purpose without implying any suggestion of threat, then you will find yourself flapping on the edge of a continuing drama, clearing your throat and indulging in sharp bursts of 'Here I say, yes, jolly good, but, now can you—no do shush, can come, not like that, no, I mean can you—here will you sit down...'.

Thirdly, the teacher must prepare himself to be economical with his own resources, not to overwhelm the children, and to be a listener, to subject his own instinct to talk all the time. To take in only one little thing when a world of riches is on display seems mean, but it is good teaching, and a wise planner will discipline himself to use as little material as possible, but to exhaust its full range of implications. He will not be so bound up with his material however that he does not look constantly for the sign that the children are ready to make their contribution, play their part in the lesson. At which stage, if properly prepared, he will listen, and listen intently, shutting out from his mind all the jolly suggestions his own cleverness proposes.

This brings us to the third stage of preparation—the tools a teacher needs. In effect the most important tools in the lesson are the children, and what they bring vastly outweighs what the teacher provides, as we shall see in the fourth chapter. However, at this planning stage it is difficult to predict accurately what the children will give, so we will restrict ourselves for the time being to the teacher's contribution.

First of all he decides the space to be used, and perhaps dresses that space in some ways, possibly also he uses light. Decisions about space are very significant: in one school the authors visited they

found drama taking place in a bare hall, and because it was dusty the children were changed into PE kit. Naturally very little drama was done, for the message of that space was clear: roll about, run, be vigorous, leap on or over things. In other circumstances where equipment has been left out, children will turn to that and away from the drama, unless the teacher sees how it may be used as an inherent part of the work.

Getting children to sit on their desks changes a classroom at once: asking them to line up, singly or in twos, creates another circumstance; to use double doors effectively, and sketch a bow on entrance is to be even more overtly dramatic. Thus it will be seen that very simple considerations of shape are significant in beginning drama, and a teacher who spends much time dressing and lighting a room is probably engaged in an otiose task, or one that will have a negative result—overwhelming the children, or attracting their interest away from the centre of the action. A piece of cloth hastily thrown over a chair will make a fine throne, and one curtain drawn can make a night if need be.

There are so many material starting points it is hard even to list them in full: good lessons have often started from a newspaper cutting—Florida crowd boos police rescuing potential suicide (they hoped he would jump). Children do have access to a lot of news via television, but rarely pause to consider the newspaper, and the very concept of news may be quite fresh to them. Some children are shocked at the invasion of privacy entailed in presenting newspapers, and have never had the chance to consider this at length in any other class.

Similarly, pictures and documents may be used as starting points. We have what is perhaps a bee in our combined bonnet over the use of large pictures, poster size, and a preference for photographs. Indeed the judicious collecting of posters can pay dividends and one the authors have used to effect was issued to advertise an exhibition of photographs of the depression in America, and features that moving portrait of the desperate and tired truck driver seeking work.

One lesson using a document might illustrate the way such materials figure in our teaching. We had chosen a letter from a member of the government to a local grandee during the 1745 rebellion, at a point when there was considerable panic in London. John read the letter on to a cassette tape, as the handwriting was

particularly difficult and we did not want children tied down by paper. They listened once, and then Ray explained that we were going to try to understand the letter, and discussed what 'understand' might mean. The tape was then played again, and the teacher then suggested one way of understanding it: the class might divide into writers and readers. The children then worked separately for some time to establish what had been the circumstances five minutes before the letter was written and five minutes after it was received. During the replay of these 'understandings' John was used as a resource of information, and he discussed at the end of the lesson the findings of the children in the light of his own informed appreciation of the letter.

We have not used either movement or music as starting points of lessons, though there is no doubt that both could be used effectively. We have made much greater use of story (sometimes in itself allied with music, as in a three part sequence on the invasion of Russia when the '1812' was allowed to swell as interval music). Story has often proved difficult to handle as it presents a completed narrative, whereas drama is concerned with the building of a narrative. Furthermore, story often places a teacher in a position of dominance and supremacy which inhibits children's ability to take charge themselves. Perhaps the best use of story is when it is especially designed to lead to specific action.

An example of this comes from some work we did with young junior children on General Gordon, a particularly difficult topic which we did not handle at all well. However, one situation was quite effectively done through story: we wanted the children to have a notion of Gordon as somehow related to themselves, yet far away, so we took the time when Gordon ran a boys' home in the East End, joined this with his work in China, and made an exciting story of it. Gordon followed home through gas-lit London by a Foreign Office 'toff' and a Chinese plenipotentiary. They are received in the boys' home, and the Chinaman's fear of Gordon being 'soft' are conquered, and he is commissioned to take charge of the Imperial Army. A nice little story, but by no means complete, for it left Gordon's boys on a limb, and there was a problem to resolve. So soon letters were passing to and from the East End and 'somewhere in China'. Drama had begun.

We must not let the claims of story detain us too long; meanwhile we must consider the last on our list of items for starting

lessons—concrete objects. These we have tended to use more than anything else: they may be seen by all when held above a class, held and looked at individually, and they have a sense of reality not present elsewhere, a profound and symbolic value.

One object we have used in several different classes is an eighteenth-century shaving mug made of pewter; it is ornate, old looking, and its use is not immediately obvious, so that it has stood in as 'Roman' treasure on one occasion. So long as children are not overcrowded with props they will find interest and value in objects which can form a focus for their experiences. A lot of classes need a grail.

In preparing materials for starting lessons it is important to try to guess children's reactions, and think out the implications of what one is taking in. For example, with the shaving mug we had to be prepared for children who might be interested more in its use than in itself, for children who might want to know how it was made, for children who would distrust it, and therefore us. On one occasion, for example, we did a lesson where John was to appear in role at a class to ask the children to enter a bid for his collection of antiques. We both felt it would intrigue the children and when Ray asked them whether he should be allowed into the school to sell antiques we were both somewhat put off beam by their immediate negative response. If we had thought through the implications of the situation we would not have needed to face this one, false-footed as we were.

Finally comes the fourth stage of planning—the actual beginning of the lesson. This we feel should be planned in great detail, down to all the administration of movement and the actual words used by the teacher at the start. To fumble or waste time at this stage is not really forgivable: children are very suspicious of something new to them and all too easily put off. More important than this, however, is the consideration of what must be achieved in a relatively short time. The teacher has got to get real belief from the class, and when he has belief he must get the initiative quickly into the children's hands; the work must be shared by all, not a bravura piece for one, plus audience; and it must lead to some significant piece of learning. Hence we say there is not time to waste on bosh shots at the beginning.

To know what you want to say, to have the words clear for the children, to know the face you need to put forward, the stance you

will take in the classroom, this brings comfort to the teacher and assurance to the children. Even though the whole of the rest of the lesson lies like a void, frighteningly empty, it can be faced and beautifully constructed from the sure foundation of a well planned start.

CHAPTER THREE

Starter for one

SHE HAD ATTENDED one of our lectures during her post-graduate training, and was anxious to engage in this kind of teaching; perhaps we had been too infectious, had not given sufficient warnings, but now she had tried, and found it endlessly difficult. One night she phoned, determined that she wouldn't give in: the children were not easy, they wouldn't be serious, and the girls wouldn't work with the boys. Perhaps it was the half-hour periods they had to operate in. I agreed that this did make things difficult, and promised to go over and teach for her to observe—she could look at someone else's silly mistakes for an afternoon, instead of brooding about her own.

I asked for little in the way of information, as I don't believe much can be written or spoken about the state of a class—it has to be seen in a classroom. All I knew was that they were lively, and the topic was medieval villages. They were coming to the end of the first term in their second year of secondary school.

I thought a little about the problem in general terms beforehand. I knew that I had to make something happen for the children and complete it in half an hour—so I would need tension and a watch; the tension could come from conflict or mystery—which was it to be? I felt confident enough, as a fresh face and a reasonably experienced teacher, that I could hold them in a conflict situation, but I doubted whether I could resolve it in the time allowed; so mystery it must be.

Mystery in a medieval village led on to murder and courts. I recalled reading coroners' court rolls from the period and having marvelled at the way a superstitious people without Scotland Yard and Sherlock Holmes managed so well on commonsense and native wit. That was interesting, and I thought a worthwhile bit of learning. On a more mundane level I had held courts in drama before, and

recalled how many 'control cards' this situation fed into the hands of the teacher—the inbuilt seriousness of the occasion, the formality of language and procedure. It looked not only good, but safe as well.

Now I needed a start, and here an object as 'evidence' seemed most suitable: it could hold attention by its own interest, would act as a focus, and have what I have come to feel is hypnotic power —a single object, uncluttered by all else, reverently handled, unavoidable. I did not need to search far: I have a museum replica of one wing of a diptych, showing the nativity, beautifully carved, but roughly torn from its cover, and with two crude holes bored in the top. It didn't take long to thread a lace through these to make it into something that could have hung round a person's neck—something that had a past.

It was in my waistcoat pocket as I went to the school, but I tried to concentrate on the other factors as I approached the lesson, notably the inner tension I would require to establish the seriousness of the operation, and the openness of eyes I would need. Both kinds of preparation are necessary for success; a slap-happy approach will not persuade children that what they are doing is important, and a teacher whose mind is clouded by the significance and multifaceted nature of his material cannot observe properly.

I cleared an ordinary classroom of its desks, and noticed first that the teacher's personal tutor-group who were helping me were very willing, but found it difficult to work together on a task as simple as this. They pushed and banged a great deal, were hasty and not prone to careful listening, and didn't look to see where they were going; they were easily distracted by anything that had the makings of a joke, and the girls would not work with the boys. A simple situation, not by any manner of means uncommon, but one that told me a lot; if I was to succeed I would need a working shape —something that would physically coordinate the group.

The class poured in, fairly noisy and careless, and at once a group of boys made for the radiators in the far corner of the room; one of them appropriated the window opening pole, and the rest showed lots of bounce. The girls tended to stand around, lost because of the absence of desks, and unwilling to commit themselves. Their teacher called for silence and began to introduce me in formal fashion, intruding hints here and there that she hoped they would be good and how lucky she considered them to be. This is always

an embarrassing time, but it is time, a teacher's most useful tool, and I had a chance to take in the whole group, compose my face into a friendly smile, but to make sure that I didn't flash too many confusing signals at once.

It gave me also time to think, and make a number of decisions: first, I must make no hostile gesture, no move that could be misunderstood; but second I had to get them into a working shape quickly and by their own consent. I must use an old, but important tool of teaching: I must make a bargain with them. This may read as the action of a frightened man, and in some ways I would accept that judgement, for I believe that the arrogance involved in taking the time of thirty five souls and using it for their own good is a kind of madness if it is not backed by the humility of some stage-fright; but also I feel strongly that open bargains openly arrived at are a part of modern adult life, and should not be denied to children.

So to begin with I left them as they stood or lounged, and the only doubt I had in mind was whether to do anything with the window pole. No immediate answer came to mind, and experience tells me that if a teacher's mind is clouded by unsolved dilemmas at this crucial stage of the lesson then everything else suffers; so I would let that one ride—if I could find a part for it to play I would, but meanwhile I would regard it as a legitimate play-object for one boy who plainly needed something to fidget with. Should it become a nuisance I would have to turn my whole attention to it, and use it; one thing was sure, I must not take it away, for this would be hostile.

I talked easily and slowly to the children, using a soft but clear voice, registering my own comfort and self-assurance. I asked whether they would like to make a murder story with me, posing this as a real question that required a real answer. The answer came, interested but still dubious, incoherent as it rattled out from various individuals set at different levels of commitment. Strangely I read that the girls showed more interest than the boys at this point. I moved on to ask whether they knew the term 'coroner', and one or two did, and volunteered that he had to have a court.

By this time the children were getting wound up in commitment, but realising the discomfort and unreasonableness of their situation —physically scattered over the room. I then offered the bargain: if they would help me to make a court, and try to believe they were there, in it, I would agree to make something happen in the court

they had made. Not only did I agree, but I promised, a word I have found of great significance for children.

We were no more than half way there, for now the self-consciousness and the comedians' active desire to deflate seriousness had to be faced; some children were now giggling at the funny new man they were having, and wondering how they could capitalise—a natural, healthy and very agreeable reaction, I feel, but not productive in this circumstance. Still I must display no trace of hostility, so to cover the action, and give time to settle, I speeded things up. This may sound a paradox, but again experience tells me that it works, and in this situation I really did need speed. So I quickly told them that a coroner's court sat in a circle, and could they all quickly get chairs and make a complete circle.

This allowed time for some banging about, for a quick word between friends, for the odd nudge; I was giving them a chance to deflate the situation preparatory to the massive inflation I would soon have to induce. A circle has many advantages in this situation: a teacher has a total view of the class, but can make quite individual relationships across the circle; there is a togetherness that is not a herd but a unity; there is a stage ready made, and it only needs one footstep to enter it; there is no hierarchy of space.

I allowed time for everyone to settle, and used this time to notice who was where; the boy with the pole and his bouncy friends, the girls who had signalled interest. I allowed time and more—for it is that magical pause after noise and before *it* begins that was most needed, a contrast with the bustle of the past few moments.

Very quietly I began to say that all of them knew why we were here, what were the events that had led up to our meeting. I pushed every grain of seriousness into the speech, but not to impose it, rather to bring out the ones who couldn't believe. A few gigglers were still hopeful, and so I turned to address them alone; this open conflict of eye against eye is most important in establishing what is required—if it does not happen at the start then the instinct for larks will burst out later and ruin what has been so carefully built.

I spoke on, outlining how I had been awoken early one morning by a woman beating on my door shouting 'Murder', and how I had hustled on my clothes to rush to the scene. Still one giggler remained, so I focussed on him: 'You remember where it was, do you not? Down there in the deep lane that divides the two

greater fields, the lane that leads off to the town.' By now the power of story had taken over—all were quiet and waiting.

Now it was essential to convert the mode from story to drama, so I decided to increase the pressure to a high point and ask for an entry from the children. Here timing was important: I described the horrible wounds the man had received, his features beaten beyond recognition; his dress all disordered where a thief had taken every article of value, everything that might identify him. Everything bar one—and here I took from my waistcoat pocket the talisman that had hung around his neck. This is all the evidence we have—pass it round with care, and look well on it; if you know its shape or substance, if it triggers off any little memory in you, then you may hold the key to the mystery.

The strong classical language was important here, and the silence that followed, whilst the children passed it round and peered at it carefully. When all had seen it I let it swing easily from between my clasped hands, and very quietly said 'I do not know to this day which of our women here it was that woke me.'

Up to this point in the lesson I had been in charge, I had controlled, and some readers might say manipulated events and children; but from now on they were in control, they were the story builders. Having made that last statement I had entered uncharted water—I had no notion whether anyone would reply, who it would be, or what she would say. My duty now was simply to radiate confidence in the task we were engaged on, to accept all contributions gravely and graciously, and to build them into the story that would develop.

It is a difficult moment in drama, this handing over to the children —especially difficult for a conventional teacher like myself, filled with desire to tell, to direct, to narrate, to make things work. The imp that tells us to chip in, to help them out, to nudge them with suggestions must be silenced; the nervous tickle that pessimistically whispers in our ear 'it isn't going to work, it's a flop, stop it all and start something different' must never show for a moment on the face. Patience, confidence, comfort must all shine through to a group of children who *are* thinking hard, and need time to think, and nerving themselves to take a part, and need a moment to discover their courage.

On this occasion I didn't have to wait long, for a girl (one I had least expected, as ever in such situations) said 'It was me'. Now

I had to support her, as she had supported me, feeding her with my interest and with easy questions that wouldn't flummox her. The time of day, dark or light would you say, weather conditions, was she puffed by the run—which way had she come? All of these questions contained no threat, were posed in an important sounding, but anxious, tone, suggesting how important the answers would be.

As indeed they were, for every answer began to build the picture we needed if we were to believe, and as confidence grew the answers became longer and more detailed. One girl was believing a lot, and the other children were drawn with her and, half admiring her, half envying her place in the limelight, were nerving themselves to take a part; but for the moment I decided to give her control, to vest my power in her, as a symbol to the class that they truly were in charge. I ended by asking her to tell me who had sent her, who seemed to have discovered the body.

The child nominated was taken a little by surprise, so here I gave him a chance to opt in or out by asking whether he had actually discovered the body or not. He opted in, as the discoverer, and soon his evidence began to flow, building the murder scene itself, and establishing why he had been abroad so early.

By now most children were 'in' the story, and a great deal of evidence was deposed from all parts of the room. As it came I continued to express deep interest, and to deepen the commitment of the deposer by questioning about the background. Had there been time I would have slowed down this stage deliberately by engrossing the evidence on a large roll of paper; but there was no time and, to my chagrin, a glance at my watch told me the infuriating news that it had stopped. From now on I would have to work on inner time.

This annoying accident flurried me a bit, and caused me to hurry needlessly—a moral not to be forgotten, and since then I have bought a self-winding watch precisely to cover such a contingency. Perhaps the reader will be amused at the seriousness of the writer, but if we are genuinely committed to making things work for children then we should pay the closest attention to timing.

To move things on I searched overtly for contradictions in the evidence, and it is easy enough to signal to children that one is searching for a victim. So keen were they that they produced three highly suspicious cases at once, a useful slowing down of pace in

itself, as each had to be separately interrogated, and a procession held round the circle for an identity parade.

And now the funsters took a hand, my bouncy boys producing a flurry of evidence against one of their friends, the village butcher. He quite fancied a central role and made a number of artless self-incriminations to support the case. This was too easy a way out to provide satisfaction, and in any case much of the evidence against him (not least his own) was contradictory. We could end on a hilarious note (and there are many good lessons that do so, and splendidly) but from the start I had felt against this: the children lacked commitment, the ability to work together and seriousness of purpose.

So my mind backtracked to one of the three previous suspicious characters; he was a small boy who had sat on the edge of his chair and taken little part—suspicion had fallen upon him in the random way that this kind of work induces—but he had protested heavily his innocence, and seemed to enjoy the thrill of the false accusation. So for a while I physically stood him up and went over the evidence against him, with a touch of third degree. When the class had quite forgotten the butcher, I turned on him portentously and made him stand, going over the evidence against him, pointing out the conflicts, but suggesting that a guilty man can very subtly cover his tracks in this way.

The court considered its verdict, and the butcher was most solemnly condemned to hang. Then for a moment we were silent, drooping a little, relaxed in the enjoyment of what we had created. To reduce the tensions for the ending of the lessons I allowed a little mild speculation on whether the teacher would take the next lesson on a hanging, and we laughed, a pleasant laughter in which all could join. And there was a moment left to point out to the children that they had together made a good story, and had deserved credit for their work.

In this example a lengthy account has been given of the preparatory stages of work in drama, with the rest of the lesson fairly lightly sketched in. It is clear that no amount of paper planning could have met with the particular situation described, nor could it have fulfilled the objectives. Indeed, if there is any virtue in this piece of work it is to be found in the economy of materials, which allowed more detailed observation of the children, and more singleness of purpose in the teacher. With a known class, or one in a

different state of mind, then other factors would have predominated —with more detailed planning perhaps, and greater freedom of action for the children. This, then, is no 'model lesson' but a description of one teacher's reactions to a particular set of circumstances.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

A NUMBER OF TEACHERS who have observed our work have noticed the large part that is played by 'sitting down and discussing'; some indeed have felt a bit cheated, not finding enough 'drama', and others have been hostile, considering that so much discussion can't be good for children. However much we emphasise the fact that we are not in the business of 'activity' in a physical sense, nor are we concerned with acting as such, the labels under which we operate and under which others see us tend to confuse.

Let us take a specific example here: we have spoken of a lesson in which one of us attempted to sell a collection of antiques to a group of children; now in this lesson the only person doing any acting as such was the salesman. The children remained themselves, children, and individuals at that, and although we were asking them to suspend disbelief (if not quite to believe on this occasion), we asked for no taking on of role. The lesson as such consisted of the boys examining the objects, discussing their merit and price, and considering how they should react to the challenge posed by the salesman. This lesson was nearly all discussion, on the face of it.

Yet if we consider for a moment what we are *not* requiring of children in our work, then it will become clear that discussion and drama are for us very close cousins indeed; we don't expect alteration of voice or posture to suit the needs of an audience; we do not require learning of lines or particularly close adherence to any one person's character-traits; we demand no more make-up or costume than is necessary for an individual to feel comfortably in his role; we require no art in presentation, no production qualities. One could go on listing the requirements of a theatrical production, and most of those items would appear on our list of 'don't wants'.

Thus we are simply using role as a convenient and efficient tool for exploring ideas and situations that are valuable in children's learning. Even perhaps the use of the word 'role' is too theatrical

to describe what actually takes place, for frequently all we are asking of children is that they should take a stance or position in relation to the theme we are studying, in order to find out what happens, and in doing so to learn about it from the inside.

There is then very little difference between a group of children working with us in discussion and in drama, though as will be seen in the following chapters exciting and valuable theatrical events do occur out of the work; it is important to state, however that they genuinely occur and are not produced.

Discussion can come anywhere in a lesson. Maybe it is at the start, and very lengthy (and to an observer tedious); possibly it is a cut-off point in a lesson when something is going wrong, or it is clear that more depth or involvement is needed for success; it can come to link together pieces of work, for development; it can come when drama is over but no one has yet explored the implications of what has happened. The teacher must be prepared to break into events at all times and reconvene the group so that they may decide rationally how to go forward.

A small example here comes to mind from a lesson John taught for a student who was having trouble with one rather naughty boy. In fact he was by no means troublesome, but the student knew no ways of coping, and so it was worth her watching for a while. The class was thrown straight into a situation (for they were too bubbly to settle to much talking at first) and the troublesome child's energies were used sketching out for us the streets of Pompeii in which we were to live. The children quickly set up house and began to practise their crafts, and the teacher quietly went round asking for the baker's shop, in order to give children a chance to articulate their chosen professions, and with a plan in mind to use the child who responded that he was indeed the baker as leader of the group. The best laid plans are always fragile, and the naughty boy had now recovered his poise—he claimed that his 'profession' was a mass-murderer.

Now at this point there was no choice but to break up and discuss! It was just unavoidable. But it was equally unavoidable that the teacher should break into discussion as if this were natural and right and intended *ab origine;* furthermore, it was vital to accept in all seriousness the claim that was made. We discussed, whilst remaining in role, just how it was that perfectly respectable people lived in company with such a man. Were they not a bit

worried? Had they tried to complain? What were the authorities doing about it?

The children were soon quite clear that they had been worried in the past, that all their efforts to get rid of the man had proved useless, and they had now settled down to the fact that he was their neighbour. They even began to show some sneaking admiration for the skill he used in his trade, and so long as he operated elsewhere (which he conveniently always did), then the neighbours didn't care a bit.

Throughout the discussion the teacher had kept a very serious look upon the discussion, greeting each fresh piece of information with interest and concern, and fitting it into a growing pattern of life in this Pompeiian street. He then sent them back to live and showed as they went back the various ways in which people perceived an earthquake's beginning: through the soles of their feet, through heat on their cheek, through glare in their eye, dust in their hair, the tip and swell of a room upsetting itself.

It was not long before the street felt every one of these sensations and more, and soon they were huddled together in the vaults of the mass-murderer's house, where he kept his stolen gold. He had a ship too, but that was several miles away and now the streets were full of gas. The only way to get through was to cover their heads with wet cloths but then, of course, they would not be able to see their way.

No doubt the reader can guess who it was who risked death to lead a line of blind citizens with shirts round their heads to safety (and that was high theatre indeed) but the more important point is that the roots of this piece of learning (for such it surely was) lay in the hastily convened discussion group held in the middle of a lesson, lest it should all fall to pieces.

So the first major point is that drama grows out of discussion, but that discussion can take place at any point, and not always at the beginning of some work. Frequently it does so, and in this chapter we shall spend most time on this kind of discussion because of its importance to a teacher working in a new way. We have found, for example, that the evaluatory discussion at the end of the lesson is much easier to conduct for fairly simple and obvious reasons.

At the beginning a teacher has to use discussion for two main ends: to give children enough time to understand and warm

towards a topic, and to allow for a full exploration of all the resources the group has to hand that may help in its exploration. This group is going to have to live off its own resources, and many children barely appreciate that they have got any; one of the perennial delights of this kind of work is to see a child discovering that his own experience and ideas are really useful to the group.

Thus the first part of any discussion must be devoted to a search for meaning—just exactly what is it that is being put in the centre of our circle today? A student was observed recently to stride into a classroom most impressively and declaimed 'Now today is rabbits'. Indeed it was not, nor could any of his effort and enthusiasm rescue the lesson—today was not going to be rabbits, not for anything. The student had read *Watership Down* and had been greatly excited by it; consequently he made the common mistake that his own degree of excitement could be kindled in others by osmosis, without any explanation. We have all made this error, several of us time and again.

What was needed in that situation was a roundabout route, one several steps back from rabbits. Indeed it is a good tip we have learned (as so often, from Mrs Heathcote) that at the start of anything one should take several steps back from the apparent starting point. The student could well have begun with books, and their effect on people, and gone into the children's own reactions to books, and their interest in his would have been aroused. He might then have spent some valuable time checking their opinion on the believability of animals who talk, before ever beginning to home in on his blessed rabbits. All this, of course, to give children time to settle down, to begin comfortably and at their own pace to be able to see what he is driving at, and to be up with him and revving as hard as they can ready to go when the start is really arrived at.

So often children's perceptions of a teacher's meaning are clouded by several different problems: language and conceptual blockage are most common, but also there is the problem of class—the teacher's experience and values may not be open to the children, they may not share the same background, children may be suffering from some defect (that can be as small as a fit of the jiffles and as large as undetected deafness) that makes them slow to catch on; but the greatest problem is suspicion. Children have had a rough experience, all of them; they have misunderstood people since first they opened their eyes, and they have been teased and sometimes

punished for it; the world of adults is as strange as any Alice dreamed of, and twice as dangerous—only fools rush with confidence to greet adult suggestions. Finally, they are just not used to being asked to take decisions, having had adults doing that for them throughout their lives. It must seem strange to a child to be suddenly treated this way, and a big risk is involved, for the adult may laugh at the decision taken, may despise it. Children need time to sort out the minefield that lies ahead of them before they are sure they will come on.

Similarly, discussion is needed to help children develop enthusiasm for a topic in hand. True interest is not quickly aroused, nor is motivation ever sent as a gift from Heaven; just as children are suspicious of what they half understand, so their background experience of the boredom inherent in adults' suggestions prevents them displaying too much enthusiasm. There is in fact amongst older children a quite overt code against 'keenness', and quite right too. What appears seductively interesting might at any moment turn into yet another burst of trigonometry in drag.

Thus respect for a subject must be built from the children's own positions, it may not be won by a teacher. Slowly the comments are accepted at face value: what people think about the topic in hand; what information they possess that might be useful. At first the contributions are miniature and painfully incoherent and naïve; there are frequent pauses, and much embarrassed giggling. And there is nothing for a teacher to do but accept—if he tries to elaborate at this stage it will show clearly that he is merely spinning words to fill the gaping chasms of silence in the room, and the relief and joy on his face as he swoops on the next contribution from the children will be very funny to them, and nothing more.

Our teacher sits, patient and confident, neither smirking nor scowling, but expressing comfort and pleasure. The way he sits is important, and where in relation to the pupils—some situations require the perfect circle of equality, whilst others need directing quietly from the back. The stance and tone of voice come from the teacher to the pupils as very sharply refined signals about how we are today, what we hope for, what we might achieve. As each contribution comes he receives it with respect, neither disregarding it nor hysterically over-estimating it; the mark to aim for is genuine adult conversation in which either party fully respects the integrity and intelligence of the other. On the other hand the teacher must

also cope with, accept and on occasion use silence, a period of thinking that should not be clouded by chatter, or a period of screwing up courage to say something risky. For risk is of the essence, creative, probing and challenging, the reverse of the snap answer, and the conventional wisdom that has never passed through the head. We are in the business of getting pupils to take risky steps for their own good, but we must allow them to do it at their own pace, and cushion them where need be.

The importance of such teacher behaviour cannot be over stressed, for children have to learn during this stage of the discussion what degree of confidence they may place in their teacher; he is asking them to be very free and open with him and with their colleagues, dropping all the conventional defences—not a very safe-seeming situation. The trust children give to their teacher is the strength of the lesson, and is worth working for; in certain circumstances (when the teacher is new, or trying some unfamiliar strategy) the children will test him pretty severely, presenting challenges of various sorts in order to see how he reacts. They may be 'silly' in a variety of ways—stupid, insolent, careless or inept, and the teacher must accept and use each challenge. For a challenge usually comes from a child with greater energy than the average, and to convert that energy to positive uses is a most worthy aim.

Whilst we would not suggest that any teacher lowers his standards in the classroom, it is important when coping with such situations neither to panic nor to react in a hostile fashion. It is far better to meet the challenge as if it were a genuine contribution, to be read purely at face value, and then to try to convert it into something positive. As an example we would quote an occasion where a group of children were examining some work they had done the week before and were asked their opinion of it. One boy shouted out that it was 'stupid'. Now in reality the boy had made no evaluation of the work, and was at that stage no proper part of the lesson. He was instead voicing a challenge that represented his own and several others' feelings: was this way of working valid, did it help you learn in the way that the more conservative lessons they were used to did? The only way to find out was to check the degree of commitment the teachers had, hence the cry of 'it's stupid'.

If the teacher dealing with the class at that stage had responded with overt anger, and punished the boy with his tongue, one thing alone could have been learned out of the situation: 'this chap is

dangerous when riled, everybody duck'. No more constructive outcome could be suggested. In fact the teacher greeted the remark with interest, and ask the boy to enlarge a little, and give some reasons; he asked whether anyone else could help the boy with supporting evidence. A discussion on how you judge a piece of work followed, and valuable learning took place; but there was more—a number of messages had flowed: 'this teacher isn't easy to rile' is the simplest, but also 'he seems to be serious about our views being important' and 'he will go to a lot of trouble to find out what we think'.

These signals or messages to the children are all part of the conscious striving to induce participation in learning, and discussion is itself one major way of achieving this: children can only learn in action, and learn best when the terms of reference lie within the range of their own experience. As they begin to take a part in discussion, perhaps only as a listener and one who nods agreement, or votes, perhaps more actively as one who screws up his face with concentration to think of a way out, or a useful fact or idea, then they start to grow in learning, and learn socially and communally. Here there are few of the barriers that form such a large part of conventional learning: non-readers may shine, and those whose social background is poor may have more exciting experiences to tell. Above all the act of taking a part, making a stand, is productive of mental courage, an attitude that militates against passivity.

In order for children to achieve these heights a teacher has to downgrade himself somewhat. He must be careful not to flood the discussion with his own ideas and language; he must not put these into children's mouths, finishing off incomplete sentences out of impatience; he must not direct or control in a way that will inhibit children's initiative. He must try not to look too far ahead, not to see implications further than immediately.

His part at first is very much as a receiver, expressing merely thanks for the messages given him. As more material comes, however, his part grows larger and more complex, demanding more sensitivity and tact than before. He will need to record for the children, will need to point to the shape, flow and direction of their thinking, and ensure that due attention is given to balance. Let us take recording first: quite simply it helps children pay respect to their own resources and ideas if these are written down when volunteered. We have tended to use wallpaper (following our

mentor) in that a long roll is impressive and not easily exhausted, but there is no reason why an ordinary blackboard should not suffice. Frequently it is a good idea to scribble up bits of language that arise in discussions that may prove useful as headings later on: a teacher may comment—'that word keeps cropping up, it sounds as though it is quite important for us, shall we have it up?' Helping children decide, but also asking for their full participation. Wherever possible what goes on the board should be in the children's own language, not subtle reinterpretations on the part of the teacher.

As more and more material gets up on the board, ideas, bits of experience, facts, useful language, then the teacher will begin to see patterns in what is being presented. When it is clear that the discussion is taking one special direction, or falling into two or more specific categories, it is useful to stop listing for a moment to point out to children the observation the teacher has made. Now they may not be ready to see it yet—it may be too early, too subtle for them at this stage, and the teacher must be prepared to drop this with an apology, and bide his time some more. It does no harm at all to say to a class 'Sorry, I just thought there was a bit of shape coming there, but never mind let's get some more things up, and try again later.' If categories are to emerge they must come with the full consent and understanding of all the children in the group: at a blackboard it is all too easy for a teacher to engage in impressive wizardry that makes him feel great but makes the children feel puzzled.

There remains the duty of the teacher to ensure some sense of balance in any discussion. Children can be remarkably prone to chasing hares if left to themselves, and they can also get over excited about one point of view, allowing an engaging partisan spirit to develop that keeps out all trace of another set of notions. The teacher's job here is to carefully recommend the interests of the alien party, exercising sufficient discretion not to appear a 'holy joe' of fairplay, nor a corrector of false reasoning. It is valuable to couch such interventions delicately, 'Yes, of course I do see the force of that, but someone else might put it differently. For example, imagine you were a . . .' Also a teacher can intrude pieces of his own experience, matching the children's part of the discussion, but also providing sufficient counter-weight to ensure its shapeliness and usefulness. Sometimes a teacher can find himself

changing rapidly from a devil's advocate into an Aunt Sally in this situation, when a class is determinedly headstrong, and there are probably good reasons for this; in such a case the teacher should restrainedly explore why the children want to hold this biased point of view, unearthing reasons in the drama, and waiting for the right moment to add the balance.

Discussion time is probing for the teacher as much as for the children: he is testing the weight their interest will bear, who is most committed, who least, and where his problems will be. Above all he is looking for feelings, for belief. His questions will lead from the simple stage of 'What do you think and what do you know about it?' to more specific and loaded questions that build upon the discussion: 'If that really is what we think, how do you reckon *that* could have happened?' and on to questions that lead to role-building and role-taking: 'Speaking as a villager, I don't agree, myself, but how can I know what you townsfolk think?' The move again is subtle and depends on the teacher's feeling that the class is ready, and his appreciation of their feelings of readiness. He may make a false start, move too quickly into role, and be faced by rebuff on the part of the children; this is in fact a rare circumstance, but can happen where children are really enjoying the discussion as such and genuinely feel that it hasn't yet finished.

The flow from discussion to drama may well take place without anyone noticing it, for children's instinct to play in role is deep, despite the surface veneer of sophistication. The enjoyment and liberation of role is attractive, and frequently discussion will trigger individuals into quite unexpected roles that they enjoy for novelty value, or because they have rejected that role before in their lives for subconcious reasons. We remember with pleasure a boy who became a bishop out of sheer bloodymindedness, and lived to enjoy not only the dress and status, but something of the reverence too.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion into drama

IN SOME WAYS our readers may find the following lesson example somewhat untypical, as we used a large class of nearly fifty children, and were working with them for about two and a quarter hours: but it so usefully exemplifies points made in the preceding chapter that we feel it worth quoting at this stage. The lesson was one of a series, and the previous week we had had one of our frequent disasters. We had been working on the theme of how an object gets into a museum display case, and had taken a real example of an excavation in the early nineteenth century on a great lord's estate. The children had worked away well in role, and right up to the discovery of the antiquities we found no problems at all.

On digging up the case full of silver the labourers decided that they must show it to his lordship and plodded up to the big house. They came into the study and plonked their burden down on the desk, and said 'We found that. Now give us a reward. We want more pay'. And it was not gently spoken, either! The class was as worried about this as were the teachers, so we stopped at that point to discuss whether the tenantry would have addressed his lordship in such a fashion in those days, and most of us felt fairly sure they would not. John launched into a description of what it must have felt like for poor folk to climb the many marble steps, to ring at the great panelled door, to face the waistcoat of a superior butler, to enter on deep pile carpets and admire the dizzy height of a gold-flecked room, with rows of columns and marble statues of great price.

The children agreed that now was a good time to try again, there were a few minutes left, so the labourers went back to their field and rediscovered the treasure. They carried it up to the hall, and put it on the desk and, in all sincerity, their first response was 'We want more pay'. We were all most disturbed, for the children were

as aware that things were going wrong as we were, so we promised them that we would find a way out in the next lesson, and left brooding mightily.

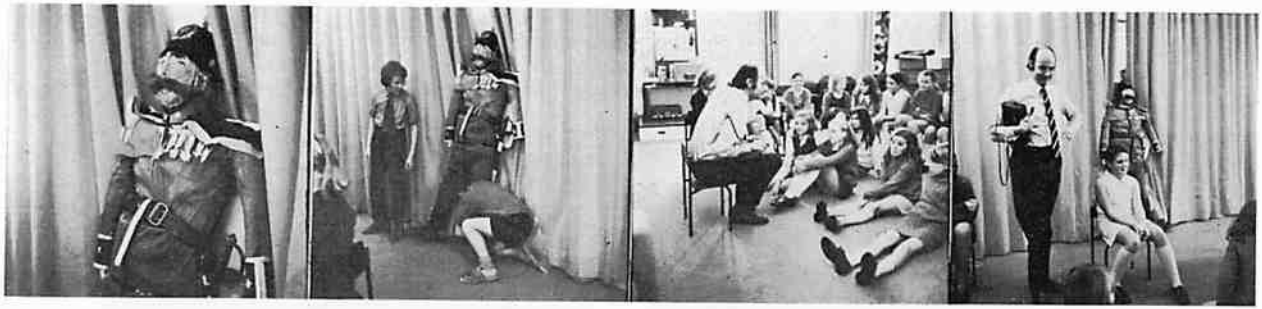
The lesson we devised centred on an attempt to understand a little more fully the concept of authority. The children were blocked in an authority loaded situation because the only parallel they could think of was bosses and workers in dispute here and now. They needed to enlarge their field, and this we determined to do. One great advantage of the occasion was that we were joined by a very able and interested teacher from Canada, Mrs Jean Nichols, and she agreed to help us mount a somewhat large and tricky exercise: we were going to share with the children five different authority situations, so that they could begin to analyse out different facets of the central concept.

Raymond began by asking the children whether they knew the meaning of our 'word for today' already, and a couple of suggestions came: power, and power to govern over people. Ray began to write these up on a roll of paper, explaining to the children that our views might change in the course of the morning so we would need to look back to see how they had changed. Meanwhile some children had sneaked some dictionaries out, furtively as if cheating, and Ray played to this notion, casting doubt on the value of a dictionary definition, but allowing himself to be pushed into writing it up nonetheless. Plainly the children had been taught to respect their dictionaries, and for some this was the end of the matter: if the book said that was what authority meant, well that was all there was to be said about it.

Ray now explained that we were going to engage in a number of short scenes where he would use John and Jean as actors alongside volunteer children. He spent some time elaborating the idea so that children could settle to it, and before introducing the first scene, involving a newspaper round, spent time asking the children for information about this job. By the time he began to introduce the sketch everybody was 'wound up' for it.

(1) Quite simply, it involved Jean as a very angry newspaper shopkeeper greeting a child whose alarm clock had failed to function, rendering her half an hour late. The situation was put in very clear terms—possible loss of job, and the little girl seemed considerably abashed, though she answered up well. Someone had shouted at her before, we guessed. Then the children were asked what kind

Lord Grey establishes himself in role, whilst his anxious steward explains his requirements to the tenants. As yet they are not convinced—prepared to watch the fun, and soon to join in, catching seriousness from us.



This lesson was recorded for us by Nelson Trowbridge, who took all the pictures used in this book. It was the second lesson of a series; in the first we had developed the children's projects on the Victorian era towards the idea of building a statue of a General. We left them a dummy and some authentic materials, and in the second week came back to find the statue complete. Ray began to interview the class on why they had put up such a statue. He was a newspaper reporter and needed to know, could they explain what is so special about generals? There was considerable discussion and more doubt, but they agreed that the Queen employed them. This led to a discussion of how a queen actually does choose a general, and one of the children was set up to interview a number of putative generals to try it out. This took some time, but at the end a useful piece of drama resulted. The class now suggested a ramification: why not give the generals a test? They went off into groups to work out some tests of generalship. At this stage some 45

minutes of hard work had happened and when the children had discussed their tests Ray drew the children back to the statue, asking the children whether any of them remembered who he was. We had not yet mentioned the name of Gordon, so the children didn't know, and John responded with a story of how Gordon, then in charge of a boys' home in the East End of London, had been chosen to lead the Emperor of China's forces. The children discussed this story and wondered whatever happened to the boys after Gordon left, and so (after some role-play of Gordon in China inspecting a very ragged army) the children began to write group letters from the boys to General Gordon, far away. As they finished they moved around to read the other letters, and finally the statue, now a statue of General Gordon himself, was taken back to its pediment.

The place for story: deepening knowledge and adding enthusiasm: 'And the butler, you see, was too fat to go through the front doors unless both were open wide.'

of authority this incident portrayed and their responses were listed in the exact words and phrases supplied by the pupils. The children were pressed to find the words or phrases which best defined in their opinion the nature of the authority being employed in the sequence. The extra time taken in doing this we considered to be well used as the children reflected more deeply upon what had happened than they would if we had accepted quickly the first thing that came to mind. The responses to the first sequence were listed: 'the authority of anger; the right to grumble; "posh" (possibly a mistaken hearing of a Canadian accent, but possibly also a very acute comment); the authority of being boss; authority to sack; authority of telling people what to do'.

The next sequence concerned all the children more closely, as they were to move in the following terms to a secondary school. Ray suggested that a boy very early on in the new term at secondary school was sent for to see the headmaster at break-time, with no explanation given. He didn't even know the location of the head's room, and was in high confusion. He decides to consult with an older boy he vaguely knows. John took this role, and explained something of the geography, rules and behaviours of the school to the new boy, who went off considerably perked up. The class now listed the types of authority shown: 'the authority of knowing what to do; pride (again possibly a personal comment); authority of being older and wiser; authority to frighten people' (this last may have resulted from a rather teasing tone used by John in the sequence, but the children also suggested that being older and wiser also involved being bigger and the concomitant powers!)

The lesson had now been going for forty minutes and the children were most attentive; beginning to realise that the simple definition of the dictionary was not going to help, some of them quietly slipped their books back into the case. The next scene involved an actual visit to a headteacher, though this time we had a girl visiting a lady Head, having been observed crossing the grass in front of her study. Jean was most daunting in this role, throwing a good deal of superiority and sarcasm into it; interestingly the little girl stuck up for herself quite well, and didn't seem too badly put down, though she confessed to being frightened when asked later. The authorities listed here were: 'the authority to be angry; the authority to tell what to do and what not to do; the authority to punish; authority over a child'. Ray spent several minutes

discussing with the girl, and then the rest of the class, the sorts of feelings undergone by someone facing authority.

4 The fourth example reverted to the newspaper round. A boy was kept in school, and would be late for his round, but a friend offers him a lift on the back of his bike. Two very likely lads offered to do this sketch, and were not at all surprised when a policeman arrested them half way home, and 'took them in'. The pair were delightfully cheeky, and had plainly experienced similar situations before. They didn't submit easily, and were still smiling broadly when the sergeant (having taken their names and addresses) let them off for this time only, promising firm action if they were caught again.

The authorities listed here were: 'the authority of being kind (great cries of "no" at this one); the authority to be strict; the power to tell off; the authority to punish if they did it again; the authority to order them around; the authority to charge; the authority to take names and addresses; the authority to tell their mums (in fact mentioned nowhere in the sketch, but an authority so great it crept in at this stage); authority to check up; the authority to take people away; the authority to do justice; and the authority to stop the boy doing his paper round' (again not mentioned in the sequence, but a clear result of telling his mum, which the boys involved felt was definitely the worst fate of all).

5. The final sketch involved a girl who wanted a new bike, and Ray spent some time getting the children's views as to what was the best time to approach parents on such a delicate matter. They felt that tea time was diplomatically supreme, and so a meal was arranged. The parents didn't like the idea of a bicycle—it was both dangerous and costly; and they discovered that their daughter had been riding other people's bikes, which they darkly considered very wrong. Further chomping of food produced a relaxation: if the girl would take a cycling proficiency test then the father would do up the girl's sister's old bike. The girl made a splendid bid for orange paint, but the parents wisely chose a sober green.

The authorities listed were: 'the authority to handle things (*ie* give and refurbish someone else's bike); the authority to tell the girl what to do, and the authority to say no.' By now we had a very long roll of paper with over thirty types of authority listed on it, and after an hour and ten minutes of concentration the children were tired. So they now took a break of thirteen or fourteen minutes.

When they returned John took over briefly to engage in an analysis of the list and a vote was held as to which of the types of authority the children considered to be most powerful. This gave children a chance to examine the whole list and remind themselves of its contents, and produced the following election result: authority of being boss (fifteen votes); authority to charge people (legally, that is) (twelve votes); authority to punish (eleven votes); and the authority of telling people what to do (nine votes). The list is interesting in itself but, more significantly, when the children went into action using authority they didn't use this ordering.

Ray now returned to begin the activity where we planned to use authority. He rehearsed the story of Aladdin to give them a notion of symbols of power, and then told them that for the time being power rested in the signet ring that he himself wore. In a moment he would choose someone quite at random to receive that ring, but first they must give some powers to go with it. There was great excitement at this stage and some children shouted out 'anger' (an interesting commentary on what children see as central to power), but in fact the three powers chosen were: the authority to rule over us; the authority to handle things; and the authority to punish.

Raymond now quickly gave his ring to a boy called Andrew, who was most surprised, and many who had hoped for it let out sighs of regret. However they were philosophical and now pressed round Andrew's desk urging him to use his power to punish, with cries of 'get David' and 'I'll do it for you'. David, a boy both agile and impish, had made a number of enemies, clearly, but he was not to suffer; indeed, as will be seen, he became Andrew's chief of police in his hour of need.

The situation was now one of considerable noise and movement. John stayed with Andrew, acting as the royal scribe, and Ray moved in and out in various roles which presented a number of challenges and a number of new ideas to the king. For example, when Andrew in revolutionary spirit decreed equality for all Raymond complained and said he was much cleverer than anyone else, so how could he be equal; Andrew did not accept his complaint, but he did add the rider 'under Andrew' to his first decree.

He now called for the roll of paper recording the various types of authority listed earlier in the morning, and a boy stood on a chair holding it up for him whilst he perused the lot with care—the

scene was distinctly medieval. Andrew, as a result, asked to be able to 'say things for all time'. Plainly he was beginning to have grandiose ideas, but his courtiers pressed upon him with mundane cries of 'improve the food', to which he tetchily had to accede. Ray appeared now as the cook who was pretty deeply insulted, and Andrew tried to deal with the situation equably, but ended up in a spurt of temper.

His next decree was short and sharp, 'everyone else to shut up'. Disorder and the pressure of affairs were beginning to oppress him. He asked to have the power to do justice, but quickly decided that it would be better if he didn't execute justice in person; the people should elect a lord chief justice. Yet even this was not a strong enough move to control the situation, and the next decree had the snap of fear and anger in it: 'The first person who even attempts to take this ring shall be punished by David.'

It was time by the clock to close, and the situation had developed well and interestingly. There were a few minutes left to discuss, and Andrew commented interestingly on the unresolved problem of justice and order: he had genuinely feared rebellion if he had acted too sharply, and he had found the disorder not only annoying but a continuing drag on the efficiency of his government.

We had placed a great strain on Andrew, who looked quite tired at the end, and indeed most of the children found it hard to concentrate at the end of the second hour; they had however learned a great deal about power and authority, and how difficult it is to exercise. Someone who is instantly obeyed is no longer simply a tyrant in their minds, but someone exercising a specific type of authority and doing it rather better than most people, for, as they found, it is not easy.

When we came to return to our situation of the discovered treasure in the following week we were able to use the discoveries of the authority lesson to our distinct advantage. Clearly what marked out our noble lord was not his house and wealth but his servants—they distinguished the type of authority he possessed. So we were able to turn the whole group into servants in the house where treasure lay, and some most effective work was done. A man with some forty servants was a man of power, who could dispose as he wished of old silver found on his land; there was no question about that—but the back stairs gossip, and the muttered threats in garden and stable showed the undercurrent of the event well.

Our objective had been achieved half by role-play and half by discussion. We had worked the children immensely hard, as we think our readers will agree, and perhaps even overdid it; but some of the results drawn directly from the children themselves showed a quality of thinking that is remarkable in average top junior school children. That someone who has been offered the chance of ruling despotically over his colleagues (a dream that several children clearly relished) should reason out that it would be both more efficient and conducive to his personal safety to choose someone else ' with a superior mind ' to do the job for him, this, we would contend, is remarkable thinking, and such thoughts cannot come without hard work, shared ideas and experience. It is in this amalgam that drama lives with discussion, almost as man and wife.

CHAPTER SIX

Where the action is

THIS CHAPTER is concerned with those parts of the lesson that take place when the whole group is in role, when the teacher and the class are attempting to conjure up in themselves a belief that will help them understand a particular situation. It is important at this stage to make sure that the terminology is understood and agreed: to us 'being in role' is by no means the same thing as 'acting', and 'believing' does not signify a largely fantasising experience: the thirteen year olds who have just 'been' with John at a party where the lights went out no more believed they were at a real party than did their teacher—it would be truer to state that they had made a pact with their teacher that, for the purposes of the particular scientific experiment they were undertaking (a study of fear), it would be easiest if all pretended very hard. For some it remains a pretence, one of the laboratory conditions; for others there are moments when the very experience of pretending takes them further or elsewhere than they had intended; for others it can become a way of life, in a good, and sometimes a bad, sense.

Role-taking is a very deliberate activity, and distinctively a learning tool. If it is to succeed, drama must come off the stage and leave behind it nearly all its theatrical props. This rather bare, puritanical view is difficult for some teachers to comprehend—you can have so much more fun at the theatrical end of the scale, they say, and in many ways we would agree; but not all children are natural actors, and for those that are an audience is required. We shall take only a very few tools and techniques from the theatre for our use.

It is perhaps helpful to consider here the purpose of role-taking as a learning tool, for it is the *purpose* for which the teacher is using role-play that it is important to distinguish. Much drama in school is properly used in order to give the pupils, as a top priority, an understanding and satisfaction from the medium of drama—the aesthetic experience is the major goal. Thus pupils who are working

towards this goal will often spend a large amount of time polishing their improvisation—refining the movement and language, making costume and objects to be used in the drama, and getting a more subtle interpretation of character—in the expectation of showing the finished product to an audience. There is little need to say that this can be a valuable and rewarding experience for the children, but our work rarely if ever reaches an audience outside those who are involved in the work. There are occasions when we work for refinement of language or a more subtle interpretation of character-attitude towards a problem but more often than not our role-play work finds its development in a discussion, a piece of research, written work, or a visual display concerned with the problems under examination. On a few occasions we may feel that the end product of a piece of work can best be expressed on tape or in a sharing of the experience with another class by means of drama. We are fully prepared to discard role-play when it has served its purpose as a learning tool: the play is not 'the thing'.

When headteachers and colleagues react to drama as 'movement and noise' they need not be correct. Certainly to some children an element of gesture will be essential, and in most drama activities some territories need establishing—'let's have the kitchen there'. There may be noise if that is a necessary part of the drama; should the situation require that some savages should attempt to terrorise a visiting white man and he calmly shoots one of them, it is difficult to see how one avoids movement and noise. Yet we should not forget that the teacher is the initiator of the whole activity, and guides it in many subtle ways: if his chief aim that morning is to avoid movement and noise we would hold him rather foolish to have allowed the scene described to arise!

A certain amount of forethought is required in every role-taking situation and a teacher must learn to judge the implications of what he introduces to children and to assess what he might need. For example, the teacher must pre-think the requirements of children being sent off to work out a situation in small-group improvisations. He finds it more comfortable working in this way and he feels he can help the pupils by moving from group to group during planning and preparation. The pupils have been considering how ordinary folk might react to the arrival on their doorstep of a fugitive from royal justice. In their groups they are going to prepare an improvisation showing one possible way in which they imagine a

family might react. Let us also imagine that this particular problem has arisen during a topic on John Pym and Charles I following the narrow escape of the Five Members on January 4th 1642. The teacher will need to judge carefully the point at which he will send his pupils off in groups to prepare their improvisation. He has decided that drama will be useful to him at this stage in the lesson because he wants the pupils to capture in language and action some of the feelings and tensions of the situation. If the pupils are sent off too soon they will probably be muddled and unclear in their minds about the task they have to do. As a whole class group, the pupils, an imaginary class of twelve year olds, and the teacher might discuss together the sort of knowledge ordinary people of the time have of the John Pym/Charles I situation. For example, do they know he is a wanted man? Would they have seen his face and features? What sort of opinions might people have of the king and his recent actions? Was there a reward offered and how much? Did the jobs of adult members of the family bring them in touch with the doings of London and the court in particular? If John Pym had to seek help from strangers what sort of precautions would he take? Such questions as these would be discussed at a level appropriate to the age and ability of the class. For example, a bright class of twelve year old pupils may be able to call upon historical information learnt in previous lessons, whereas a less able class will rely mainly upon commonsense and how they imagine people behave today. After discussion along these lines the teacher might set up the situation by saying, 'This is the day on which John Pym, the fugitive from the king, comes to your home for help. I don't know what time of the day or night he will choose nor how he will approach the house. But he is in need of assistance. What sort of assistance he needs I don't know, but certainly his need is great enough for him to take the risk of calling on strangers.' This sort of preparation helped a class of twelve year old boys and girls to improvise the situation with Ray. After their improvisations the class discussed the motives and reactions of people in the families they had been watching and wrote down the following statement: 'families in King Charles Street, somewhere in London, faced the following family problems in January 1642 when a fugitive from justice called upon them: the problem of family unity; the price of taking a risk; an opportunity to seek revenge; the problem of human weakness—i) drink ii) money rewards; the problem of

keeping a secret'. Each group illustrated these headings by producing a detailed diary entry recording the day's events.

Thus, we try to send pupils off into groups (assuming we have opted for splitting the class) with relevant background information, a 'hot' interest in the problem, and a time and place setting for the drama. We do not tell them what will happen and pupils have a wide range of decision making responsibility within the framework. The problem has been selected, usually by us in the light of the needs of the class. In the above example the problem was refined from a general level of 'people on the run' to the more focussed problem 'how might a family react when confronted by a fugitive from royal justice?'

On some drama occasions the teacher may need clothes to help children into a role: a long robe may just sufficiently hamper the movements of the king as to remind him that he is the king, and must bear himself kingly. Similarly, hats may sometimes help younger children to hold themselves in a character that might otherwise slip. Sometimes these items can also bear symbolic meanings of great power: we once had a simple cloth to cover a chair to make a throne, and that cloth took on power—whoever held so much as a corner had the royal grace.

Thus the room may be dressed itself: sometimes the arrangement of the furniture will have a particular significance, and at other times children will be able to convert the furniture to their own uses. We remember a factory in which chairs balanced on different edges became now delicate, now powerful pieces of machinery under the control of highly skilled mechanics. The factory itself was made more and more realistic by crowding the machinery closer and by darkening the room, so that children crawling after lost threads were in some danger if they did not watch out.

A range of objects can also be very useful to a teacher whose needs arise all in a hurry: boxes of various sizes to contain buried treasure, the parcel from home, the bomb or whatever it is going to be; small bowls and jugs that may be sacramental one day and for humble feeding another. Each teacher will find the sort of thing that he regularly seems to require: for one of us it is quite simply an overcoat, which helps him change character at speed when necessary!

Most important of all, however, are good old pencil and paper,

perhaps unexpected items, but absolutely necessary we find. Letters suddenly need sending—we must write to the British Museum about this, perhaps they can help us; General Gordon will need to know how we are getting on back here; will the queen necessarily know all that, and take it into account if we don't write? There are a myriad reasons for writing within a drama situation, and not only letters—notices need putting up, names and addresses need taking, a record of the occasion needs preserving.

So provided, one may feel confident of not being caught short in action, and now action must come, though it may come for some more readily in the form of building up exercises than the immediate thrust into drama. Some groups are happier to spend time 'limbering up' towards a situation, and this may often reflect the difficulty of that situation. If we ask children to try to comprehend what it is like to be under immense strain, as soldiers in the trenches were, they will require not only a whole range of clues throwing into the pool, but also will require a range of tentatives towards the situation before actually entering it. What was a firestep really like? exactly how deep? How long were the ladders? Who went first? and last? Could you get your equipment caught up in something? Would they really shoot you if you didn't go?

Question after question arises and many of them are answerable in drama terms; the impatient teacher may be prone to say 'Cut the cackle and let's get on with it'. We have experienced, however, in these situations a requirement by children to mark time for a little before they enter the scene. Perhaps they want to try out the feel of the dress, and will need to slowly kit up: puttees on, helmet adjusted, belt on, check all running lines free, fix bayonet, work bolt, check bombs, etc. In a way these children are indeed entering the drama already, experiencing some of the nerves of waiting.

This period of clueing up is a very significant time, and needs fine judgement on the part of the teacher: if he takes too didactic a role, and starts to pad out the information-giving the children will fall away from their commitment to believing, and become 'pupils' once more. On the other hand, if he ignores the desire for information the drama to come may break down because of sheer ignorance; he must answer all requests sensitively, whilst allowing the class itself to do as much of the clueing up as possible—if a problem of one child is resolvable by another this is far better than a teacher giving the answer.

Too long a period exercising, however, can be dangerous for the health of the drama. A teacher can begin to ' perfect ' the children's movement and gesture, and soon becomes a director. It is simply enough for one child to know that he can relate to another in a particular movement for this piece of drama; he does not need to go on practising forever like some gymnast.

Now all depends on achieving that belief we defined at the beginning of the chapter—without it there is no drama, no learning, and it is under such circumstances that teachers who try to use drama fail and denounce it as a time-waster; they never believed, nor did their children—they only struggled hopelessly with a bit of material, like a dog-fight.

The first to believe in any classroom must be the teacher. It is no use urging children to pretend while you circulate, alternately criticising and giggling at the children, for they quite naturally will fall into giggles themselves, and resentfully criticise the whole activity. The teacher must have a role, sometimes indeed a series of roles, so that he can work from inside the drama. On his seriousness, and in response to this challenge, will they take on themselves their own roles.

The teacher, let us repeat it, needs do no acting as such, no Laurence Oliviers need apply; for the taking on of a role is more the taking on of an attitude than a character. Thus a teacher may need to be distrustful in a role, rather than another person being distrustful: using his own voice and mannerisms, he may simply concentrate on being sceptical—' I can't take that for true, who told you? Well, I have never heard a good word said for him, so I cannot tell why you should put so much faith in his words. Have you reasoned it out for yourself? Personally, I wouldn't have it, no, never . . .' As this strong attitude warms and develops it becomes in itself challenging and intriguing: why is he so sceptical? is he right to be so—surely there's more to it than that? isn't someone going to answer him? well, it might be fun to try—after all there is every kind of signal coming from my teacher that he is no longer teacher but someone inviting me into a game . . . ×

At first, of course, this is not easy, and requires from the teacher a degree of determination and facial and voice control that no one should underestimate. After being ' teacher ', with its many faceted role-structure, it is indeed hard to achieve the unblinking concentration on one role alone, and harder still not to respond to all the

side issues—the children who express their doubt and confusion in giggles or other silly behaviour must be accepted, but their behaviour sedulously ignored for the time being. There is no room in a role for breaking off to reprimand someone. One must drive on, assured that this is the right road, and that the children will soon join you on this journey. Actually teachers get embarrassed far too easily, and believe that their children take much more notice of them than in fact they do; certainly children don't bear grudges for failed lessons, as we sometimes imagine they do, nor do they remember your gaffes against you—otherwise we would have red revolution in most junior schools, never mind the secondaries.

One way that a teacher can deepen his role is by exercising a fair amount of control over his language and enunciation. Very often today the normal teaching style is flippant and light-toned, and this will rarely do for this stage of building belief in drama. What is taking place is important, significant for all those present, and deeply serious; therefore it must be spoken slowly, precisely, with all the necessary underlinings and repetitions that are triggered off by pupils' reactions. The language must be formal, at times even classical, and gesture must be sharp and clearly defined—no wild sawing the air is implied, but simply gesture that has been thought about rather than involuntary tics. Again, it is possible that a teacher starting in this mode will feel faintly silly in a modern classroom, but we would urge him to compose himself: John spent several mornings speaking blank verse with a group of boys who never once suggested that they recognised any difference between his speech and theirs!

The teacher working in role is a most powerful and effective operator, and it takes little time for children to respond, sometimes physically at first with a nod or movement of the body, sometimes simply straightening themselves as if for action. That they find the stimulus powerful is plain to anyone who tries it, and there are some odd results: as will be seen in a later chapter, one group of boys who were otherwise quite disobedient and farouche in manner quite fell in love with a teacher's role of despot—being bullied and shouted at quite ' turned them on ', and they begged for the tyrant to reappear rather than go on working normally. They jumped to it with a will, happy in the *belief* that they were only *pretending*.

The teacher's job now is to cherish and cosset all responses that come, however small and naïve, however cheap and inarticulate.

This again is difficult, for a teacher is used to correcting what he receives, and rarely does he express gratitude (except in sarcasm). The teacher in role has to be very grateful indeed, must make much of these first contributions, and in no way must he downgrade them. Sometimes they will need a bit of translation, for at this stage there is 99 percent shock in the classroom, and barely 1 percent belief, and if the belief is to grow the children must see their contributions come almost magically 'right'. Frequently it will be a naughty child who moves first, challenging the activity, and that must be taken and translated into a supporting move; thus the child who says 'you are wrong' must be upgraded and supported in his stance; one may say in reply 'I have been wrong before, many, many times, but here I feel the very certainty that lies deep within the bones. I have never felt so sure, and you come to tell me I am wrong. Parade your evidence, let us see who has more to speak on either side.' Here, one is signalling very strongly that this is a game, and that one is well prepared to play as an equal partner—there may be fun in it.

For example, we were working with a class of boys, who were quite inexperienced in drama, on the problem facing a young man who wanted to go off and fight in the first crusade. He had a widowed mother and several younger brothers and sisters and the class of boys were thinking about different ways in which the young man might deal with the problem of leaving his widowed mother. Most of the class knew from previous history lessons that times could be dangerous for a woman living on her own without a man in the twelfth century. Suddenly one of the boys said with an impish grin, 'He'd get his mother to marry again'. This comment brought forth laughter from the rest of the class to which we could have responded with anger. However, we expressed interest and encouragement in the boy's comment by asking him how he thought the different members of the crusader's family might view the suggestion of the mother's remarriage. Our response surprised the class because it had turned a flippant remark into a rather interesting problem and the class were soon discussing problems of inheritance, step-fathers and family unity. Often we have found that a remark which is offered with the view of testing out teacher contains the seed of a creative idea which can surprise the pupils when turned back in their direction.

As the teacher cossets these germs of belief along, like one

tending a cutting of a rare plant, there comes a stage when something begins to grow for the class as a whole. It is a matter of fine judgement when this moment occurs, but certainly one should beware of tangling overlong in combat with individuals. This is a participatory sport! When it is clear that some belief is beginning to grow in parts of the class, some willingness, to use Coleridge's mighty powerful word, then the teacher must bid to engage all.

Now, when we say 'engage all' we are not implying that drama should engage the whole class all the time; implicit in this kind of work is a series of options for children, moving in and out of the drama according to their own pace and flow of belief. We happily see children opt out of our drama activities for short periods, though observers have found this hard to take. We, perhaps smugly, respond with the figures of those attending in any given formal lesson, according to recent research. More significantly, we ask people to think back to the most recent teachers' conference they were present at, and assess how much they themselves attended to.

Often teachers are worried by pupils who say very little. In drama sessions this worry can become almost pathological because some teachers believe that drama can only be involving children if they are physically active. We try to structure our drama so that every child gets a chance to participate at the level he finds most comfortable. Every class seems to contain a proportion of confident children who enjoy taking a very active part but, at the other end of the scale, there are children who do not feel ready yet to take, what appears from the outside to be, an active role. Yet quite often these children reveal in writing assignments which follow drama activity that their imaginations have been working superbly during the drama. Therefore we try to ensure that our drama situations are so structured that every child can find a role of comfort to himself. We never force a child into a role, but find a role which allows him a position inside the drama rather than a spectatorship.

To return from a digression: the teacher makes a bid to engage the whole of the class by posing some kind of individual question. It may be quite simple: how did you get here? who are you, I don't seem to have your names and trades on my list? would you like to be for or against this motion? when did you last see the murdered man? These questions challenge, for they hide another question, which is 'are you ready to join in yet?' and as the children respond, sometimes with merely a shuffle of the feet, sometimes with an

eager flow of information, the teacher can get an overall view of the state of participation and, more important, its nature. Endless clues will come to him from this procedure, and he will need to think them through in his head quickly. Luckily, it takes a fairly long time to get round a whole class with one question to each member!

Not only is the teacher armed with a lot of information by this process, but the children themselves are committed to be either hot or cold in the drama, to join at some level. To have said ' I am his girl friend ' with a giggle is meaningful—it is a part that must be played from now on, with the teacher's help. He must now begin to feed situations that will reinforce someone who is half brazen, half nervous so that the ' part ' may grow into something very much more complex, rewarding, and interesting for all.

To establish characters and scenes requires a new phase of teacher activity; here the teacher is a questioner, deepening what he has been given by the children. To take our brazen and nervous girl as an example, the teacher here might start some questioning line that might establish the moment she got engaged—how it happened, how surprising or expected it was. He might move further in questioning to establish the comparability of the families of the potential bride and groom; more questions might probe problems in their relationship, the hopes and fears for the future. Thus the teacher builds on the foundations he is offered, and the edifice is made secure in the process of questioning—a contradictory answer is not ignored but explored, to reveal the nature of the contradiction, and the part it might play in the drama; no needless gaps are left.

It may seem, on paper, an endless exercise, this deepening of role by questioning. In fact it can be done relatively quickly if the questions are perceptive, and do not act wastefully in the situation; it may create a laugh to enquire further about ' Aunty Fanny ', but if it does not give the central character support then time is merely being wasted. Also, one may move from child to child in questioning, rather than ' grilling ' a child at a time. This is particularly valuable in building relationships within the group, and also gives a teacher time to think a little about questions that are to come.

During this period of deepening of the situation it will become clear to the teacher that some children have things to offer today that are really significant—and we write *today* with care, for it is

not always the same children—this may be a matter of mood. Drama requires energy above all things—not the energy of the ballet dancer, but mental agility. We have written in this book at some length about naughty children and their challenges, and perhaps the reader may have decided we are a little bit obsessive about these children; to be honest we are, we find them to be marvellous sources of energy in the drama, and because they are met with hostility elsewhere they tend to like us too!

To be serious, a teacher needs to look for energy in any class, if the drama is to be worth anything. This is not to say that he will allow some precocious child to dominate over others (though this is a situation into which it is all too easy to fall), but rather that he will draw most power from those to have most to give, and will act as a conductor, giving that power to those who have little. As the questions flow a teacher is looking intently at power levels, looking at those who have a lot to give, and deciding how it might be used.

Now often in school we pray over children and mouth words we don't care to understand, and of these words none have such force in the teaching situation is 'from those that have, much shall be demanded'. These are good words, and should be responded to by teachers. The reality is, sadly, that those who have recline in luxury and give very little, but in drama the reverse may gloriously be true. The leader, the extrovert, the bright lad one can lean on, he is the one who must be challenged by the teacher, pushed with hard questions, catapulted into crisis situations he must deal with alone, asked to speak for all, asked to act fairly, to be reasonable when chicanery and corruption are beckoning. It is amazing how strong children can be, how far they may be pushed as leaders who have to accept all the responsibilities of leadership. Rewarded, too, are the teachers who see children acting so well, acting in a real life sense, not with any whiff of the stage.

In a number of drama situations we may find a need for a 'major' character—perhaps someone to take the part of the king or queen. We try to choose a pupil for the part not by saying, 'Who would like to be the king (or queen)?' nor by telling a pupil from a class we may not have taught previously to 'be the king or queen', but by describing the demands made by the role. For example, we might say, 'We need somebody who thinks they understand how they can be a king who has to deal with an ambas-

sador from a powerful foreign country. He will need to handle the ambassador carefully so that the foreign king is not offended, as that would mean war against a much larger country.' In this way the pupils know the likely demands that the role will make upon whoever takes the part. Frequently the child who offers to take on a 'major' role finds it difficult to gauge the demands of the role until he has tried. Much support may be needed from the teacher before the pupil feels strong enough to be comfortable in the 'big' part. We vividly recall one lesson in which a class of primary children were thinking about the way a queen would choose a general for her army. (The class were thinking about Queen Victoria choosing Gordon to head an army.) Ray asked the class, 'Is there anyone here who can show us what sort of questions the queen might ask when choosing generals for her army?' In this case the class decided, rather than a volunteer coming forward, they were sure that a girl called Rachel could do it. She herself was willing but unsure. She came forward and sat on a chair in front of the class who were themselves sitting on a large carpet. It became clear that she would need considerable support in order to fit into the role with any degree of comfort. Plenty of time was essential. We could not rush this part of the lesson. There were no other likely applicants for the role from other girls and if Rachel 'failed' then no other girl would dare risk attempting the part. Ray gave her time to choose how she would sit and where she would like the chair placed. To allow her time to get the feel of the role some potential generals were chosen, each one as dubious as the queen. Then came the trigger question, 'How would you find out about these generals?' And then followed the nervous answer, 'Well, get to know them, invite them to the palace . . . ask them questions'. Still there was too much nervousness to go forward, so more detailed arrangements were made. For example, how would the generals approach the queen? They should bow. But can they sit down? The queen a little uncertainly agreed. 'Well, where would you like the chair to be?' 'There.' At this, some children disagreed, but it was firmly pointed out that this was the queen's decision and not theirs. Now she was asked to choose a name and various children put suggestions, all of which were ignored by the teacher whilst he waited for the queen to decide. Her particular role required confidence in making decisions on her own. Finally she decided she was going to be called Queen Elizabeth.

The arrangements were made for where the generals would wait. In the garden, the children decided. And how should they be ushered in? Finally, the queen was asked whether she needed any assistance, and she chose two servants to 'ask them what they think'. After seven minutes of very careful preparation, the queen and her subjects were built up sufficiently to make a tentative beginning.

This example has been quoted in some degree of detail to emphasise the importance we attach to the slow and careful process of preparing for drama. It cannot be rushed. The seven minutes spent on helping Rachel into her role paid dividends not only for her but also for the rest of the class who, by watching and identifying with her situation, developed their own attitudes and beliefs in the situation.

One last job for the teacher building belief, and perhaps the most difficult, is to decide exactly where the action lies in the drama. There is no drama without action, without a story that must grow at life rate towards some conclusion. The major task is to find a focus, for in any dramatic situation there are a hundred and one routes out, and the children will see many of them, if not most. The teacher's job, if the class is to believe that this is a real life situation, is to put some constraints upon the developing drama that make it go in one direction, for that is what life is like—unimaginable hordes of circumstances structure it in a single direction, when it seemed that anything could have happened.

To decide the focus, the teacher has even less time than when he decided his role at the start, but the decisions are in some ways similar: they relate specifically to the class, its conditions and interests, and they have to be made in an authoritarian fashion by someone acting as a democrat. This last is quite unavoidable: there will come a time when the drama must take on direction or die, and the teacher is the only person who can put sufficient spin into the situation to send it upon one line. By one well placed question the teacher may send a group of children, fully in role, in one direction or another; it is his duty to be sure that it is right, that it will be a learning direction, but it is his honour as well as his right to do so. No director of any play, however great, employing however superior actors can have such pleasure as the teacher who finds that one, well placed question.

Yet we can see a wider view of 'action' in our drama—for it

starts, stops and restarts and, as we have pointed out, flows from discussion to role and back again frequently. A major and indispensable part of the 'action'—the learning action—takes place in our lessons after the pupils have tested out their ideas through role-play. This part of the 'action' often takes the form of a discussion, sometimes with the pupils talking in role and sometimes with the pupils talking out of role as they look at 'those people in whose shoes we were standing a few minutes ago and whose problems we were considering'. An example might usefully illustrate this stage of the action.

Ray was working with a group of college of education students and a class of ten year old pupils. The pupils, who were in the role of early nineteenth-century factory workers, had just been visited by a member of a commission enquiring into factory conditions. The member of the commission (Ray) had interviewed several of the workers in the sitting room of the factory owner. Later on he had asked to visit the factory and had walked around the busy factory pausing here and there to ask a few questions. Sometimes he referred the replies he obtained from the worker to the factory owner who accompanied him on his brief visit. At the end of this part of the action the pupils divided into groups and were asked by a student what sort of report the visitor would make to the government. They were also asked to give their reasons for their opinions. In this case the pupils replied in role as factory workers. The conversation that took place might have happened in the street as the worker was on his way home. The pupils drew their opinions largely from the actions and behaviour of the factory visitor. His manner and face were not kindly towards the workers he had interviewed. It was very odd how friendly he was towards the factory owner and when a grievance was voiced by a worker he always seemed to refer to the factory owner. How could they really speak their minds to someone who did not have the sense to realise that he should have spoken to them in private? In short, there was precious little chance that this man would tell the truth to his masters back in London. This in-role discussion was, in our opinion, an essential part of the action, although pupils were sitting down talking to a student. The importance resides in the fact that this was the part of the lesson when pupils could reflect upon what had happened in the previous part of the action and crystallise their thinking. Historically, the pupils were beginning to

understand some of the problems facing the factory reformers. Role-play was serving the needs of the historical learning in the widest sense.

Sometimes the action is continued by asking pupils to write in the role of the person they have been working. The lesson described above could have been continued, if time had allowed, by asking the pupils to write a letter to a friend about the particular problems they faced in the factory and their opinion of the likely help they could expect from the member of the commission. Probably the writing would follow the discussion as the latter helped pupils put their observations into words before they faced the technical problems of writing. Older and more experienced pupils may have continued the action by attempting to characterise the visitor by writing the report he presented to his masters about the visit to that particular factory.

In chapter nine we describe a series of lessons in which a group of boys became so involved in the problems of having a blind king that they continued the action for three successive Tuesday mornings. It was possible, with this particular class, for the lessons on the second and third mornings to start immediately with the entry into the classroom of the blind king. At the end of the lesson the blind king left the room and in no part of the lessons did the class or teacher need to speak out of role.

The almost unique power of drama based upon the serious commitment of teacher and pupils resides in the tremendous energy it generates in all concerned. This energy is often lost by teachers instead of being channelled into further learning. We find that when we have been successful in harnessing the energy released by drama the quality of the pupils' thinking and writing is remarkably exciting and creative. Unfortunately, our greatest enemy is the forty minute lesson. There are no short cuts to drama of educational quality, as we hope this chapter has indicated, but with skill and experience it is possible to head in the right direction towards where the action is without getting lost along the byways.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Drama in action in school

TOWARDS THE END of the period in which we wrote this book one of our students, who was on his final teaching practice, asked us for help with one of his classes that was tackling the topic of fear. We decided to help him by taking the class for a couple of sessions during which he would watch the lessons. We quickly discovered that his class were quite inexperienced in this sort of drama and made us strongly aware of the special problems involved in working with an inexperienced class of children for the first time. As a number of our readers may be contemplating drama-based lessons with classes which are equally inexperienced as our class, it seemed a sound idea to build this chapter on drama in action around this experience.

Before describing our own lessons, it may be helpful to define more carefully what we mean by an ' inexperienced ' class in drama terms. Evidence from the school suggested that the class, a group of twelve to thirteen year old boys and girls, were of average ability in basic skills and in producing topics in project work. The ' inexperience ' of these pupils revealed itself to us in the following areas, all of which seem to us to be basic to success in drama:

a inexperience which shows itself in the difficulty children have in making group decisions;

b difficulty in working cooperatively; the children find it difficult to develop ideas and generate suggestions amongst themselves. Answers to open-ended questions are often refused and children appear to be lacking in confidence;

c embarrassment by most members of the class at speaking in front of the rest; often comments are greeted with sniggering by others in the group and a sense of commitment takes a long time to develop;

d considerable hesitation and doubt in acting or speaking with initiative, the pupils leaning heavily upon the teacher's leadership;

e any situation which is strange or out of the ordinary routine takes the pupils by surprise and they find it difficult to cope with in a satisfactory way—the class reaction may be one of a long period of silence and inactivity accompanied by giggling. By contrast, 'experienced' classes enjoy surprise and quickly exploit it into a useful learning situation;

f 'inexperienced' classes are weak in decoding verbal and non-verbal signals from the teacher. The language and non-verbal signals they use lack variety or subtlety and the class are relatively unable to send or receive signals. Usually the language register of these classes is restricted and this is noticeable in their limited choice of language appropriate to the situation, and in range of vocabulary;

g an inexperienced class finds difficulty in accepting a teacher in any other role—the class act with embarrasment shown again in giggling.

In most of these areas the class we taught for the two lessons showed varying degrees of inexperience and lack of confidence. As the lessons proceeded we found ourselves 'trapped' by these problems into discovering ways of helping the children, and the techniques and methods we used were first steps along the road to overcoming these sorts of inexperience. Clearly two lessons could do nothing of lasting worth for the children's particular inexperience, but a description of these lessons may be of some value to the teacher who finds himself in a similar dilemma.

Before we met the class for the first time we knew nothing about them apart from their age and that the class was mixed. The topic of FEAR was chosen because it was of interest to the student. Our planning before the lesson was fairly simple. John should make the introductions, begin the work with the pupils on how many types of fear they could list, and then hand over to Ray who would help the children choose one type of fear to work on. This was the only handover point we could plan without knowing the class, but we assumed that in the time available—little under an hour—there would be opportunities to pass the teaching comfortably from one to the other. For the whole of the first part of the lesson with this new class we should both be concentrating on picking up the class signals which would tell us about the degree of experience of the

pupils. For it is only when we have the answers to this question that we feel confident in structuring the development of any lesson.

Because the school knew we had planned for some drama work, the class were timetabled into a hall for which the children normally had to change into PE kit, though for this occasion we specially requested full dress. The clues we had, so far, indicated that drama in the school was usually movement based and likely to be physically active from the start. We knew we wanted to begin our lesson by having the class sitting, and in a state of undress they would soon became cold and depressed. By the time they entered the hall the pupils themselves knew that there was to be some difference between their normal drama and that of this session: they had been told not to change!

When the pupils came in John met them and asked them to sit on chairs in a circle in the middle of the hall. The boys sat in a tight half circle and the girls sat in a half circle facing the boys. A gap at two portions of the circle separated the nearest boys and girls. John spent some time explaining why two strangers were about to teach them, and why there was an audience—the class teacher and several students. His manner with the class was clear and friendly with a touch of humour. To this the class responded slightly. Most of the boys and about half the girls appeared interested, but wary. A group of girls were giggling in an embarrassed manner which they clearly found difficult to control. In the meanwhile, John explained why they were going to think about the topic of 'fear'. It had been 'set' by the students. John talked about some of the things that he found fearful and then asked the pupils if they could name some other sorts of fear that they may have experienced. The replies given by the pupils came very slowly from individuals. Their voices were hardly audible and John needed to employ a question and answer technique to clarify and expand on the few words they originally offered. Ray listed the replies on a large sheet of paper, and the final list, which took ten or fifteen minutes to obtain, read: injury in sports; fire caused by a thunderstorm; getting run over in a city by cars with silent-sounding engines; heights when there are no safety bars; being blind; fast moving machinery; somebody else.

At this stage of the session John handed over to Ray, who up to this point had been silently but visibly writing on a large sheet of paper. About twenty minutes of the lesson had lapsed. The

signals we had picked up verbally and non-verbally indicated that: the class were finding it very hard to cope with the novel situation; language was limited—both in terms of uttering confidently before the rest of the class and in finding words to express ideas or personal experiences relating to their own fears or that of other people; the list showed that these pupils were not picking up ideas from previous speakers—each suggestion bore little relationship to the one given immediately before; and they were still finding it difficult to fit John's manner and language into a recognisable teacher role—normally teachers don't go to this extent of explaining the reasons for their lessons. All the suggestions on the list had been made by the boys in the class. Ray began by spreading out the list before the class and asking pupils to move if they were unable to see the list easily. One or two boys moved their chairs but a few others who could only see the list with difficulty chose to remain where they were. He asked them to look carefully at the list of suggestions and try to suggest anything which was common to the list. One or two muttered responses were made but on the whole the question was beyond the class at this stage. Ray then asked them to choose from the list the particular fear that interested them the most. He added the suggestion that they might like to discuss the choice with a friend sitting nearby. This resulted in immediate contacts being made and a few fairly animated group discussions—some clearly about the list, others taken as a breather and a chance to talk about the new teachers. After a few moments Ray asked the class to vote on the fear which individuals found most interesting. Four voted for 'injury'; four voted for 'getting run over' and fifteen for fear of 'somebody else'. About six pupils didn't vote and of those who did more than half voted on a friendship basis. Ray asked those who had voted for 'injury' or 'getting run over' if they would mind working on the 'someone else' suggestion. Their manner expressed a neutral response—up to this point in the lesson many of the pupils had made decisions in a careless way and those in the minority did not sufficiently care to bother themselves very much about not getting their choice. The signals of the lesson indicated that most of the class were still 'cold' but prepared to 'go along with things' provided there was no undue pressure upon them. Amongst the group there was evidence of a large weight of learning inertia. In some schools learning inertia is the common factor of each day:

this was not true of this school: along corridors and through some classroom windows we had noticed a large amount of lively project and artistic work.

Ray continued by asking those who had voted for fear of 'somebody else' if they could give some examples of the type of person they feared. The class responses were added to the list which now read: Fear of somebody else—who is stronger than you are, *eg* tough with special authority over you, like the head of a school. Not unnaturally, the last suggestion caused a good deal of giggling and private comment. The first suggestion was freely amplified by individual boys naming others in the class of whom they felt afraid. The naming and actual pointing out of those concerned was another indication of little real belief in what was being said. Most likely, boys were pointing out chums with whom they enjoyed a friendly wrestling bout in the playground. For a short while longer the class were encouraged to add to the list of types of persons feared and, although a few moments of serious thought took place, most pupils found it difficult to add any more ideas to the list. Ray then asked the class if anyone could suggest why persons of this sort might be feared. The class found this question very difficult, a few mumbled suggestions were made, but it became clear that this was a bad move by the teacher who should have noticed that the language difficulties of the pupils would in all likelihood render this question a block to further development of the lesson. Immediately after posing the question, Ray recognised his mistake and said to the class, 'It's sometimes very difficult to put into words. Most of us experience feelings of fear at some time or the other and know what that's like even though we find it difficult to explain in words. I want you now to see if you can work out a way of showing us any occasion when a person might be facing a feeling of fear. Try to work out just that moment in time when the fear is at its worst for the person. Spend a few minutes in groups discussing ideas and then we'll come together so that some of you can show us a few examples of fear.' This move in the lesson was designed to take the pressure off the verbal aspects of discussion and it would also reveal something more about the pupils' ability to create a small improvisation. The request to 'choose just a moment in time' signalled that a 'long' play was not required and it would also test the ability of the class at selection of detail.

The class quickly divided into groups; the boys' groups came

rapidly to action with various fighting sequences, whilst the girls stood around in groups showing far more hesitation. One group of girls approached Ray and asked him to explain what they had to do. They began to talk about the situation of fear in a family context. Mother or father might be very angry about something done by a daughter. How might either parent show the anger? By words and expression. How would the daughter react if she were afraid of the parent? The girls moved off with these ideas. In the meanwhile the fights of the boys were falling into the usual cliché pattern so Ray decided to gather the class together. This sequence of the lesson lasted about five minutes. We were now about ten minutes from the ending of the lesson. The class were asked who would like to show their plays. After some hesitation a pair of boys put up their hands and we watched the first fight. This was presented in the form of a mime. The fight was lively and excited the watchers, especially the boys, and at the end Ray asked the two boys where and when the fight took place. They described a night scene of narrow ill lit lanes although it had not been possible to 'see' the narrow lanes in the action. The next group came forward eagerly—four boys who worked in pairs of two attackers and two victims, once again in mime. At the end of this scene Ray asked the boys to repeat the play up to the moment of greatest fear for the two victims. At this point they were asked to hold the moment like a still picture. The moment chosen by the boys for holding showed the attackers a few feet away from their victims who were cowering against a seat in a position which showed they were utterly trapped, defeated and fearful. The still picture had all the elements of drama and powerfully impressed the rest of the class who craned forward in their seats. The boys were successful in holding the picture for a few seconds so that the body and facial image gave impact to the scene. Ray told the group to relax and then asked the class how a film maker might shoot that moment of the action. A number of thoughtful responses were offered and a boy was chosen to be the film director to show us exactly the positions of the camera as it surveyed the moment of terror for the victims. This was the only occasion during the hour that we felt a sense of real commitment, genuine interest and attention by the whole class. The boy film director circled the fighters, who had once again taken up the moment of terror of the still picture, and told us what his camera was using as a focus of interest. It would be the faces and figures

of the victims just before the attackers strike. The school bell rang, breaking into the concentration of the film making, and John finished off the lesson by telling the pupils that we would return later on in the week to do some further work on the topic.

It might appear that this session has been described with an excess of small detail. However this has been deliberate because we wish to show as carefully as possible the range of pupil signals we observed and used in order to judge the degree of experience of the class. Most of this lesson was hard learning for us and our moves were designed in order that pupils could show us a cross-section of their learning behaviour and attitudes. In an earlier chapter we have discussed the importance of this knowledge to the teacher. A number of our teaching strategies were clearly ill-judged, especially the pressure upon the language of discussion. Some of the questions we used were too abstract for this particular class, but not we feel for this age group generally. Perhaps the most important weakness of the lesson was our inability to interest or involve the girls who only really joined the lesson in the last few minutes during the film episode of the fight. It is worth remembering that drama lessons quickly reveal to an observer the state of interest and involvement of a class. If these girls had been disinterested and uninvolved in a class lesson which required of them mainly a receiving and writing role it would be far less obvious to an observer. Some pupils in some classes cultivate to a high degree the inscrutable facial image which entirely masks the thoughts and feelings behind the mask. Drama removes this mask and makes clear the levels of commitment and disinterest.

Our planning session for the second lesson was entirely different from the first planning session. We were now in possession of an array of information about the class which we have indicated within the body of description of the first lesson. The first priority for the second lesson must be directed towards capturing the interest of the girls. However, we did not want to split the class into two groups—boys and girls. This might appear to be a solution to the problem, especially as there were two teachers. One could make up a play with the girls; the other with the boys. We considered it important for the class to begin to realise that in some learning situations, and drama is one of them, the different interests and attitudes of boys and girls can work towards a far more interesting and richer experience. Perhaps the girls could begin to

see the boys' interest in physical conflict as something more than merely puerile, as one sort of response to conflict. Indeed they had showed an interest at the end of the first lesson in the fight sequence. On the other hand, the boys could learn from the girls something about the implications of physical conflict for women. They are the people who 'pick up the bits' after the fight; who clear up the mess; who mourn for those who are lost; sometimes they are the cause of the fight between members of the other sex. Thus we value the extra dimensions of sympathy and understanding that can be achieved when both male and female attitudes can be involved in the same situation. The pupils' relative lack of linguistic skill would be a large factor in the second lesson. The answer, it seemed to us, did not lie in resorting to a mime lesson entirely without words, but clearly the language challenge had to be more within their grasp and it would probably need considerable support from us. Underlying the whole of the first session, we felt a basic lack of belief or commitment. They had 'gone along with us' but only with a small part of their total resources. The plans we made for the second lesson were an attempt to meet such problems of inexperience as we have outlined above.

We planned to build the lesson around the fight sequence which occurred at the end of the previous lesson: we would attempt to get some sort of explanation for the fight—who were the four persons involved in the fight? Why were they fighting? Were other people involved who were not actually present at the fight? Did anyone else care about the fight and its consequences? What happened to the injured victims? Was life in the area altered at all by the outcome of the fight, if so how and for whom? In this way we should be attempting to give the fight meaning and significance for a group of people including women as well as men. How could this be structured into a teaching strategy? Ray would begin by asking the pupils to watch the fight sequence again, but this time the audience would be asked to imagine that they were not watching a film but a real happening in which everyone felt some personal concern in some way, as yet not clear, the lives of everyone watching the fight were personally involved with the attackers or their victims. No further clues would be given to the class—such as saying, 'You are the mother of one of the boys, you are the brother of one of the victims'. This move was no more than an invitation —that could be rejected—for pupils to consider a way in which they

might become an interested party in the fight. During the fight John would appear with a flash camera, draw near to the fight itself and take a number of pictures. This was to be done in full view of the class. Ray would join the circle of watchers.

The second lesson started according to plan, the flash shots of John's camera making an impact on watchers and fighters, but the latter continued with the fight for several minutes before finally leaving—the victims lying still whilst the attackers took up a position at the side of the acting area. John now moved towards a group of girls sitting in the centre of the semi-circle of watchers. His camera was slung over his shoulder and a notebook and biro were in his hand. He started moving around the group of girls and the following conversations took place:

Reporter: (showing a reporter's card to the girl) I am from the press and have been covering the fight. Do you know any of the boys involved in the fight?
Girl 1: (no response from the girl who looked startled by this question directed at her.)
R: Do they live round here?
G 1: Yes.
R: I want to put this story into the paper. Who is it talking?
G 1: Elaine Stevens.
R: Mrs E Stevens?
(No reply from the girl, signs of shock and surprise.)
R: Can you give me the number of your house?
(No reply.)
R: Well, has your house got a name?
G 1: (after a long pause) Yes, it's called Barn Cottage.
R: Can you show me a person who might be able to tell me more?
(G 1 says nothing but points to a girl sitting a little way round the semi-circle.)
R: (moving around to another girl pointed out by G 1) Can you tell me anything about the fight?
G 2: Yes, there are often fights in this district.
R: Who are the boys involved in the fight?
G 2: I don't know.
R: Do you know if the boys involved in the fight have any friends?
(G 2 says nothing but takes the reporter to one of the boys.)
R: Do you know about the fight?

B 1: There are no fights in this district. All is well. (He then continued to expand at some length by putting up a false case about the district. This was done with little prompting from the reporter. B 1 tries to involve his friend, a boy sitting beside him, but he refused to say anything and looked very embarrassed at being asked any questions.)
R: Well, what are you frightened of? Who are the people who have got this hold over you?
B 1: Hodd and Pratt.
(At this point John, as the reporter, was not clear if these were invented names or real names of the boys actually involved in the fight. Much later on it became clear that Hodd and Pratt were the real names of the two attackers.)
R: Do you know where the victim's mother lives?
(Reporter taken to the mother's 'home' which was on the opposite side of the room. This girl had already been strongly indicated in whispers by the class as a 'good actress' although none of the pupils who had been approached had yet taken the reporter to this girl.)
G 3: My son is thirteen and he's not at home very much . . .
(She then proceeded to give a lot of information to the reporter, speaking fluently and with a voice that suited the type of mother she was imagining herself to be in the interview. She managed to portray the background and atmosphere of the home and the district with clarity and precision. So fluent was she in invention and speech that the reporter could not keep with her, and it is not possible to quote her words directly.)
R: Will you accompany me to the hospital so that I can see your injured son?
(This she agreed to do and both of them move off to the hospital—a bench in the acting area where the fight had been staged.)
R: Are you badly hurt?
B 2: My knee is broken.
(Reporter now announces that he must go off and file the first part of his story.)

This sequence shows quite clearly the delicate and tenuous web of drama in its early stages with an inexperienced class. The girl who took the mother's role showed courage and strength and we now knew of one person in the class who, with support, could help

in building up the seriousness and depth of the play. Others had spoken and found a suitable response and all had learned that John would not embarrass them in front of others. He could use the device of ' the stranger trying to get at secrets ' in order to protect those who said nothing. We had begun to establish roles in the community and places such as the hospital and homes of some people in the community. During the interviews Ray had sat reading a tabloid for a while in the semi-circle where he was clearly visible to everyone. From time to time he looked up with a suspicious glance at the reporter and about half way through the interviews he moved over to the two attackers for a whispered conversation. After a while the attackers and Ray moved nearer to the reporter. They stood silently round the reporter, facing the person being questioned but behind the reporter's back. Slowly some of the class read the message of this silent group. One or two of those interviewed hesitated in their stories to the reporter. As he became aware of his standing listeners the reporter tried to get their names and stories, but the leader told him that he had already asked far too many questions. He knew a copper's nark when he saw one. Whilst the reporter was away filing his story, Ray asked the class what sort of story the reporter was likely to write about ' our district '. ' Do you want our district described in such a way? ' The response indicated that most of the district were on the side of Ray rather than the reporter. By this time Ray was being referred to as ' the boss '. He had refused to give the reporter his name. When the reporter returned, the boss asked him to read out the story that he intended to write for his paper. The reporter gave a full newspaper report appropriate to a tabloid, which stressed the aspect of fear and mystery in the district. Pratt and Hodd were named in the story. The class showed great interest in the reporter's story; a number signalled their belief and identity with the district described by the reporter. Could this feeling of identity be strengthened? The boss made an appeal to the district, ' Did they want this sort of story published? Is it true? ' About half the class thought it was true and they were asked to move into one part of the hall. The rest who did not believe the reporter's account moved to another portion of the hall. Some pupils were moving according to friendship groupings but others were taking sides: ' this district is ruled by the boss and we are tired and fed up with the fights and trouble '. Others, including the attackers who were enjoying their

nearness to the boss, wanted to keep their activities secret. A number of the girls seemed resentful of the reporter but the friends of the mother stayed with her. The reporter moved towards the mother and asked her how she intended to bring her son from the hospital to home, 'Will it be safe to make this journey?' She insisted she must take her husband with her and called in one of the boys to take on this role. The boy chosen accepted this role quite easily. The reporter got the support of a number of men who seemed to be in sympathy with the victim of the attack and the whole party moved off towards the hospital in protective formation in spite of the protests of the mother who challenged the reporter on his right to bring along so many people to the hospital. The reporter apologised and said that he thought his move was helpful. The mother half accepted the reporter's explanation and allowed herself to be accompanied by the other men. The two attackers made an appearance on the scene at this stage, not to attack the victim, but just to be present. This situation began to create a certain amount of dramatic tension as nobody was clear about the motives of the attackers. Unfortunately the two boys were unable to exploit the dramatic possibilities although they had been taken over very effectively from the boss who appeared to have gone to earth for a while.

With about ten minutes of the lesson remaining both reporter and boss withdrew slightly to observe how far the pupils could take over the situation. Two groups began to make tentative moves; one was the group who had accompanied the mother and her son to their home and the other was a small group forming itself around the two attackers. The mother was clearly likely to be one leader, whilst the other group was likely to be led by one of the attackers. The action he contemplated was not of violence or a fight: he seemed to be feeling his way towards getting an influence over the others whilst he tested out the attitudes of others towards him. After a few minutes it became clear that the drama was not strong enough for the class to make any real initiatives. We asked the class to gather around in a circle and signalled that the drama was over for the time being at least. Ray began the discussion by asking the class if they thought the district had acted as they did because of fear. A number of pupils suggested that the district was not acting out of fear but because they distrusted strangers who could never understand their community. John then moved in by asking

them whether they believed newspaper stories. Their reactions were mixed and we both felt that the class wanted to continue the drama. They had been intrigued by the events of the second lesson, and probably needed time to make up their minds about the happenings of the previous hour. The end of school bell and waiting coaches brought the lesson to an abrupt ending. A few children hung about the hall not quite sure whether to talk to us about the lesson. With some slight encouragement one or two began to talk about where the play should develop next time, possibly with their own class teacher. A few smiles flashed in our direction might be an indication of a certain amount of pleasure from the activity.

Thus ended two one hour drama sessions with our inexperienced class. As visitors to a school we had little means of checking up on the pupils' reactions to our sessions. For us, it had highlighted some of the problems of starting off a drama activity with such a class. With an inexperienced class, drama begins life as a very delicate plant which can so easily be killed off before it has really been born. The pupils' initial responses are slight and tentative and require considerable support from the teacher. In our first lesson we put too much weight upon preliminary discussion; the second lesson was more successful in this respect, most pupils spoke in role but patience on the part of the teachers was essential at this stage of development. The establishment of belief and seriousness rests in large part, initially, upon the teacher's own belief and this is judged by pupils from both the voice and face of the teacher—a slight smile hovering around the lips proclaims loudly to the pupils that teacher himself does not really believe. This can be an exhausting business for the teacher: we certainly found these two sessions very tiring to us physically and mentally. This is quite understandable when it is remembered that the teacher has not only the task of monitoring the class signals but, additionally, the task of initiating action. The energy required for the latter task with an experienced class comes from them, but the picking up of signals remains equally important with both types of class.

Our readers may be thinking to themselves, 'and where would you go next with your class if you were the class teacher?' We feel that we should want to 'fix', in the next lesson, some of the ideas and feelings of this experience into a more concrete form. Probably we should move into writing—possibly the production of some written documents that might come out of that district. This would

include some newspaper reports in which the fight incident could be viewed in a variety of ways; possibly some taped interviews done by the pupils which would reveal local inhabitants' views on people in the district; a map or plan of the area showing the relationship of people living in the district and facilities for young people; and some written portraits of local characters. Such documents could help to fix and 'make concrete' points which the drama was unable to do. It would also help to reinforce the group nature of the activity, for as we have indicated above we have been working towards a whole class activity rather than a small group one in which boys and girls work separately. This writing would also serve to suggest future drama activity and we should look particularly at the areas of tension which the pupils generally observe in their district. Much of the writing would be done 'in role' and this should help individuals to clarify their relationship to the rest of the community. For, out of the inexperience we have described, there is only one direction of growth, towards satisfactory community relationships.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Drama in the curriculum

MUCH OF OUR teaching has turned upon an historical base, for a number of reasons: it is our area of interest and competence, and it provides an inexhaustible supply of materials for story-making and discussion; hence it will figure largely in this chapter; but we have not taught history because we believed it to be the be-all and end-all of the curriculum, nor have we made any special claims for its priority in education; rather we have been concerned with the duties a teacher has towards a child in our time and how best he may carry them out. Thus we shall begin with some general considerations, but even when we have moved on to talking about the relationship of drama to history in the curriculum we hope it will be clear to the reader that drama can relate to many subjects and to many curricular aims other than this limited range shown in our own teaching.

But first, we would be failing in our duty if we were to suggest that drama is some kind of 'maid of all work' relevant and useful on all occasions. It surely is not, if only because it is hard and special. One needs a great deal of concentration and effort for drama to succeed, and one cannot expect this all the days of the week, neither from teacher nor from child. Further, it has a limited use, dealing only with those areas where one can afford the time drama takes. If there is a quicker and cheaper method of learning in education, then one should take it. Sometimes that way will be instructional—this is how to do x, y and z, now watch; sometimes it comes from simple exercises—now just you do this a couple of times and you will see how it goes; sometimes it comes from collecting and sorting information—let's find out all we can about this subject and make some sense of what we find; sometimes it comes from hard reading and research and careful, pointed discussion, trying to resolve what has been found into a pattern.

Drama does serve, however, in all teaching that concerns itself with enquiry: it helps focus down onto one area of study that is hard and real; it helps refine questions that will reveal that area more thoroughly; it demands a range of thoughtful answers as against the single snap answer; it requires that hypotheses be tested; it demands that results should be examined.

But set out in this way, no doubt, it doesn't look very much like drama, yet the process described is the process of so much of the successful teaching we have done and have seen done. No drama can move until the focussing has been achieved—drama cannot live in a world of abstractions and generalities, it is highly specific and real. If a class suggests an emotional area for explanation, then the first job of the drama teacher is to find out where and when that emotion was felt and then by whom; a focussing that can have great value in education, demanding always to have an example to discuss.

Similarly, drama cannot hobble along even on questions that have been improperly formulated and thought out: the question 'did the robbery take place?' simply requires the answer yes or no, and doesn't require the answerer to use any method of arriving at his response; the question 'was the man who did it really a thief?' demands thought, commitment and learning. If the answer comes quickly 'all men who take from others without permission are thieves' then this hypothesis demands testing, and no one can come out of that experience without considerable thought and perhaps a realignment of previously hard-held views.

The second major contribution drama makes to the curriculum is again in terms of process, encouraging a stable set of attitudes. In much of the present day curriculum, children are denied initiative, learning other people's answers to questions of varying degrees of interest and importance, and repeating other people's experiments with varying degree of accuracy. Drama puts the initiative right on children's shoulders and demands that they should begin to invent. Now inventiveness is probably one of the most valuable objectives a curriculum could have, promoting not simply a creative and confident activity amongst children and future citizens but, more significantly, an experience of initiative and decision taking that the world at large constantly calls for from educationalists.

It is by no means easy, as we have tried to point out in the

preceding chapter, and the experience grows but slowly, for decision taking is not an independent, egocentric activity, or we cannot allow it to be in any good education. Decision taking can only properly be encouraged in an informed community, where the deciders are willing to take into account the wills and needs of others, and will look also to the implications for others in any action well before they take it. In a word, drama is democratic; either that or anarchic, with fighting on the floor and all the other marks of failure. The experience of democracy in drama can be overt (as for example when we constantly appeal to a vote in deciding) but even when it is tacit and unseen it happens, and who can deny its value?

The third area where drama helps is in language development and one may only sketch the many-sidedness of this contribution. Children who have a purely formal education may well develop a good control of language, undoubtedly, but if they lack the challenge to use language, and the opportunity, it cannot grow at all. Drama provides both, in one of the richest developmental situations education has to offer. The group of children who had invented the heroic Chief David, for example, were forced into a situation where their ability to explain themselves was stretched to the uttermost. On the first occasion when their evidence was challenged they had to meet up with a very convincing adult who showed that beneath the palace of their hero had been found pots of gold and skulls with holes smashed in them. This was a staggering blow, yet the children coped—they talked it through, looked at the evidence they had and stretched their minds to see it in many different ways in searching for a solution. It came: naturally people banked with Chief David, who was the strongest man for miles around—there was no need at all to view the gold as damning evidence in itself. As for the skulls, they could well have been witches, who had to be executed in those days, and holes put in their heads to get rid of the evil demon. But just in case some trace of magic remained then the strong feet of Chief David would keep them down. On the other hand, suggested the children, they could represent the honoured burial of men who had died valiantly in battle for their tribe.

As the challenge comes, so does the response, and the language that is required to frame it will grow, however stumblingly, and grow to a stature we should all respect. There have been many times

in our work together when we have been overwhelmed by the power of a child's words or argument, and paused for a moment in respectful silence at a wonderful achievement in language.

That this is more often in oral terms, and related to a particular situation, will be obvious to our readers but we do not mean to underestimate the importance of reading and writing which plays a large part in our work. It is necessary to gain considerable background knowledge as a study proceeds, sometimes simply looking up answers to direct questions, at others browsing extensively through books to get the feel of a period. The drama is only supported by the children's belief in its reality, and one plank of reality is fidelity to the original in detail and in general. For this reason history or drama (whichever you describe it) which takes place exclusively in some bare hall can never succeed; the children will need immediate acess to books, and the right to spend long or short periods using them.

The writing comes most often in small packages, in refining with great care the wording of a question or a statement we shall need in the drama, or in the writing of a set of instructions one of us will have to carry out. This determination to have the wording right slows down the operation, but is a major part of its success on many occasions. Similarly, there are many sequences of drama that grow into writing—often the preparation of letters. We have resolved many situations succinctly in the preparation of a letter that leads out of the drama, but also sums up precisely what we have learned in it. The arguments over its wording, over the thoughts of the man who wrote it, the predispositions of the recipient are themselves a part of the drama, but wind it down and into a new phase.

Indeed, drama itself may often be used as a means of presenting the conclusions of a piece of work to others. At the end of half a term's work on the English civil war, Ray asked the pupils in his class how they would like to present their work to another class who were a year younger. The work had involved role-play activity, discussion and research. The pupils had been obliged to do some of their research from rather old school text books which they had found difficult to use, so their response was 'not from books because they are boring and don't tell you what you want to know'. After further discussion they came to the conclusion that a tape recording could make a lively and interesting way of telling others

about the civil war. They planned the tape to consist of episodes of explanation plus a number of dramatised sections which would tell the listener ' what it felt like to be living during that time '. The drama episodes were done before a microphone and one member of the class provided a link between episodes. At the end of the tape making, the class listened to what they had done and decided that certain things could be made clearer if they produced a pamphlet to accompany the tape. Thus, the final presentation consisted of dramatised episodes on tape plus a pamphlet of pictures and writing. The class were pleased about the obvious permanence of this end product which could not have been achieved by a ' live performance ' on its own. In this piece of work the pupils were far more aware of a receiving audience than they were in most of the drama we have mentioned in previous parts of this book. On a number of occasions we stopped our work in order to listen to taped episodes and ask such questions as, ' Will they understand that bit? ' and then perhaps would come the decision, ' Well, the link man will have to explain it '. One very interesting idea which came from the class was the suggestion that the link man should try to involve the listeners by asking them questions rather than a straight exposition of what happened in between the dramatised episodes. In this way they began to move towards the idea of a didactic tape and the notion of teaching others about the civil war. At the end of this piece of presentation the pupils were able to point out the strengths and weaknesses of drama as a means of telling others about the civil war. A rather nice balance of presentational forms had been achieved, although at first the pupils had intended the whole presentation to be a dramatised tape.

Let us now consider more closely the relationship of drama to history in our teaching; many teachers of history have now joined the great revolt against fact-grubbing, that mindless conning of more and more dead information; in its place they have tried to erect new structures, based on relevance, usefulness and interest. This new history curriculum is more active than passive, and in it the children are taught the skills of the historian and given exercises in which they may practice them. The objectives become more and more precise in such a curriculum, and much more closely related to the practice of the craft than to the acquisition of knowledge. For example, here is a set of objectives we devised before going in to teach the lessons described in the next chapter; they are framed

to describe the activities of the historian that the children must undertake if they are to achieve a full understanding of the work we were to do with them:

1 recognises that contemporaries are likely to have held different views about a personality, group of event(s) in history than might people examining them today;

2 recognises clearly the standpoint and attitudes of an observer;

3 reconstructs for himself the situation in which the observation was made;

4 evaluates the reported observation on the bases of the motivation and the purpose of the report;

5 searches out all available evidence;

6 processes similar evidence in like fashion;

7 distinguishes clearly between different points of view in the evidences;

8 compares evidences to see whether they confirm one another;

9 steadily builds up a picture of his subject that is both coherent and credible in the light of the evidence and his own experience;

10 produces a convincing and satisfying account which is as fair as possible to all the sources.

Judged as an account of the historian's activity, the ten objectives must seem scrappy and inadequate, but if we see them as aims for children's work the standard set is very high; indeed, for a number of teachers and historians, the aim of getting children to behave like historians is considered unreasonable. The performance of such high-level activities is restricted to the trained and experienced mind, they claim, and children can only play at the job, never do it in any real sense.

There is much in what they say: teaching in this way can only produce a simulation of the reality, but that is no bad thing. Children learn through play, testing out their perceptions of reality, seeing whether they are accurate, whether they fit with one another in a moving, working model. They are also concerned to play with adult roles in order to 'try them for size', maybe just to see what they feel like, though sometimes with some sort of vocational consideration. Finally, a child plays with a role for purely empathetic reasons, requiring to know what it feels like without ever desiring the reality—just aiming at understanding.

Hence it is that we have spent some considerable part of our time in bringing children very overtly into the role of 'being an

historian '. We have not used the double-bluff of retaining them in their own role of child, whilst giving them adult tasks to do, but we have attempted to go the whole way into a play situation, frequently beginning a session by addressing the children as if they were fully fledged historians.

Two examples will make clear what must, at this stage, seem eccentric to say the least. In the first case we had a group of young children who had elaborated a character called 'Chief David'. Chief David was a late iron age leader whose tribe recorded his history in paintings and stories. These were gathered together by the class in a book which at once became the transactions of a learned society devoted to the study of Chief David's tribe. The work was very good and the children very confident, so we chose to attack it, to undermine it sceptically to see whether we could get the children to form a rational and logical defence of their materials.

Ray went in on the first week to address the historians in congress and took with him some fresh evidence—photographs and objects from the site that cast some doubt on the virtuous character of the prince. The following week John went in and gave a brief lecture to the historians in conference, casting doubt on the validity of oral tradition. Naturally, no long words were involved, but two points were made with the children fairly simply: the language they were using sounded suspiciously like the Bible and made one doubt ('and David killed a bear and he fed his people'), and, secondly, evidence passed from mouth to ear to mouth again tended to disintegrate—and we played a game of Chinese whispers to prove it.

Both of these challenges were put in fairly strong terms—a lack of belief in the historicity of these historians' subject, and were met with speedy and surprisingly sound responses. The feeding of the people was like the Bible in sound, they granted, but the words simply meant what they said: there had been a great famine, and David's people were so starved that even when he brought the bear into the camp they could not move forward to reach it—he had to tear it apart and then, with his own hands, he fed his people.

To put children into the position of being historians is to make them think, and to make them try to think like historians. Sometimes it is needful to challenge, as in the lessons noted above, but on other occasions it is necessary to downgrade the adults a little in order to raise up the children's self-esteem. On one occasion Ray

went into a class as a museum director who was very angry indeed with his subordinate, John; John had been delving about in the cellars when he should have been doing his work upstairs and had come across a metal jug bearing a label marked 'Backworth?' and nothing more. Now he was wildly excited about it, and claimed it was a highly significant piece of Roman ware, and should at once go on exhibition; but Ray kept on trying to explain that unauthenticated items were valueless to a museum and that authentication, if possible, would take endless time and trouble. But John had foolishly persisted and demanded that the museum advisory board be convened: *they* should decide whether the investigation should go on, and whether they could offer any help.

In the two situations described we were demanding work from children, and laying down the condition—that it should be done in the role of historians. We were putting up realistic problems, which we knew children could learn from, and would enjoy. Simply, we were inviting them to be historians for a while, and the invitation has never been turned down to our knowledge, and it has frequently produced some outstanding results.

The historian's major source consists of documents, and his skill lies largely in their accurate interpretation, so much of our teaching revolves round documents. Frequently, in John's teaching, these have been real documents, or photocopies carefully reconstituted, to give an atmosphere of reality: a letter that has been re-folded and sealed, or a bundle of papers roughly tied with red tape are far more of a challenge than the crisp edged sheets from the photocopier. Part of the value of documents in school is their difficulty of access—the bad handwriting, the complex language, the mystery of the words lost with a ripped-off seal; children enjoy the business of decipherment, and it has the great value of slowing down the whole operation, so that children have the time to sort out the real meaning of the words, rather than gliding superficially over the surface.

There are occasions, however, when no real set of documents will suit the needs of a situation, yet documents are required if the children are going to behave as historians. We have not feared to create documents to suit such occasions, though many historians and teachers will be shocked to hear the confession. We would only point out that we are engaged in a 'pretending' situation, and that the children accept 'made up' material readily and, as will

be seen, only detect them as forgeries when the occasion demands it.

Again, a couple of examples will help show how and why we use these made-up documents better than any extended argument in their favour. In the museum study described above John was commissioned to make a search of Northern Record Offices to find out any evidence about the digging up of the 'Backworth treasure' (which many readers will recognise as being a real Roman hoard, whose discovery was the basis of all the evidence we put before the children). Our students actually created the archive containing the following items:

1 A letter written by Lord Grey to a personal friend telling the friend of his intention to have a ditch dug. The letter is only a fragment and some words are missing.

2 A work schedule referring to the work to be done on the ditch.

3 A diary entry made by Lord Grey at the end of the day on which the treasure was discovered.

4 Part of a folk song made up by the workmen about Lord Grey, it refers to him in very unflattering terms.

5 An entry in the Steward's diary on the day the treasure was discovered.

6 A list of the items found in the box—no indication of the writer of the list.

7 A letter written by the wife of one of the workmen telling her sister about a couple of rings her husband brought home on the day of the discovery.

8 An entry in Thomas Watson's account book, a silversmith in Newcastle, referring to some silver he has smelted down and of the value of the silver.

9 A letter written by an assistant of Thomas Watson to a friend describing some extraordinary pieces of silverware brought into the shop that day.

10 Two entries from Thomas Watson's diary. The second entry describes a strange customer who wanted to sell some unusual pieces of silver.

11 & 12 Two maps, one of the Estate and the other of Thomas Watson's premises in Newcastle.

Each of the documents contained the name of the Record Office from which the document had been loaned together with a reference number and detail of the collection to which it belonged.

We had six sets of these documents prepared for the children, and to give the whole activity a little more tone we asked the children to sign receipts for the material. Further to this we said that if they wished to have more information about the document they could write to the archivist (one of us fielding the letters and responding accordingly). The historians then worked away at the documents to see whether they could reconstruct a story of what actually happened from the often conflicting evidence set before them.

Their story was then played out by a group of actors, and the remainder of the class sat round with the documents to hand, watching hawk-eyed to see whether anyone did anything that didn't occur in the documents, for we had told them to shout out and stop the whole proceeding if they saw such an event. It had quite the atmosphere of a police reconstruction, and was very satisfying as a means of teaching the use of documents to an historian.

None of the children questioned, or needed to question, the authenticity of the documents in that case; far different, though, was the reaction of the 'Chief David' class to the made-up documents we used with them. This came as the last challenge to their evidence: after John had been shown how Chief David 'fed his people' he expressed great interest and conviction in the story of the Chief, and agreed to contact all university libraries to see whether any further evidence in the case could be found.

The following week we returned, loaded with magnifying glasses and tweezers and other impedimenta of the document repairer's art. We also had a number of packets marked with impressive sounding university library titles such as 'The Pontifical Institute, Toronto' and 'Cracow University Library Centre for Iron Age Studies'. In these were the remains of documents that we had forged, then buried, burned, ripped, snipped and otherwise defaced. Many had large lacunae. Half of them were writings that tended to favour Chief David, whilst half were bitterly hostile.

These were distributed with considerable solemnity, and warnings of how delicate and difficult they were. They had, to date, never been handled by historians. The children set to work with such care and nimble-fingered delight that one would gladly trust them with much more valuable materials. They quickly fitted fragments together, jig-saw fashion, and it took only five minutes for one group to decide on a way of filling lacunae: they measured the

words and found the average length of words so that they should know how to guess those that were missing more precisely. Soon the air was filled with cries of ' but there isn't room for a five letter word, so you must be wrong '.

As the first excitement began to evaporate a new mood struck the children. Individuals left their groups for whispered conversations with others—odd phrases like ' felt-tip ' and ' ruled-paper ' floated around, and a small delegation approached John to ask for a bit of writing ' in his normal hand '. At this point John had to depart (in reality) and Ray began to pull things together in the role of a radio reporter, and it was not very long before the accusation came: these documents were all forged. The case was quickly, and expertly, substantiated, and Ray asked, appalled, whether they knew who was at the root of this crime. ' Fines and Verrier ' came the very serious and quiet response, which Ray took up by asking ' What can have possessed two such people to do such a thing? ' This did not in any way throw the class, who were soon ready with a response: these two historians had discovered another iron age site and wanted to announce it as a really great discovery, so before doing so they were casting mean aspersions on Chief David's tribe.

Thus children can learn usefully from real and made-up documents, and can treat the latter with belief or doubt according to the needs of the moment; but it should be noted that there was a heavy investment of belief even when the forged documents were challenged.

Perhaps the most important kind of historical learning and understanding drama can provide is the ability to feel what others felt—the power of empathy. We have observed three kinds of empathy resulting from dramatic work: a straight personal empathy in which a child begins to feel a little of what a character or group under study felt; empathy for a situation in which children can feel the mesh of constraints that pulled once on a group; and finally a temporal empathy, whereby children re-living at life rate a particular situation can, as it were, ' hear the very clock tick ' and understand the constraints that time itself puts upon history.

The first kind of empathy is what one might expect from drama, and need detain us little here. It can, however, surprise one with its power—when the children about whom we will be writing in the next chapter came to the end of the project John asked them whether they had any questions and, to a boy, they wanted to know

how they died, what happened to them after what they had been in our drama. A rather unclerical bishop, who found that he lived to a great age and died comfortably in bed, clearly felt pleased with himself, almost congratulating himself on his geriatric feat and condoling smugly with those who ended early on the block!

Situational empathy is rather more complex, and in many ways more productive in that one is working with groups. If one is concerned, as we have suggested overleaf, with children's understanding of the implications of their actions, with their knowledge of the interrelatedness of things, then this kind of empathy must come high on the list, and one must deliberately set up situations that will help in its development. In one case we set up a household of some fifty people, for example, whose aim it was to keep their station, yet do their best to find their master's secret. At first this was a great game, and the window cleaners (three forceful characters) came to the master's study to clean the windows, assured that they would soon pick up the scent. But then Ray (the master) told them sharply to mind their business—they had cleaned here yesterday, and should go at once to the back of the house. For a while they were moody and ' foiled ', plotting amongst themselves, but as time drew on they began to make use of the gossip they picked up from grooms and silver polishers, coachman and butler, piecing together what they could. For them the reality was keeping their station, but still trying to win, and the tensions of that group showed nicely on their faces and in the work they did later. No easy victory, this kind of understanding, but a great one nevertheless.

We have both been concerned with the problem of children's understanding of time in all our teaching, and have on occasion become thoroughly depressed by the research evidence that shows children to be incapable of understanding historical time until the late years of secondary school. With time so large an element of historical understanding, there is little wonder that we became depressed, but the way out was through a new view (for us) of historical time as no longer aeons, centuries, reigns or years, but time as it is for us, time on the clock we really see, time on the calendar we physically tear off.

Ray began this process in a piece of teaching with some youngsters he had accompanied on a visit to Portsmouth. They tried to remember it, and found their memories conflicted, some, for example, putting it at two weeks before, some at nine. Ray then

gave each of them a strip of paper folded into eight equal sections, noting with them that all measures of time are equal, in diaries, calendars, and on the clock. He asked them to think back over the last eight weeks, to see what they could remember and then try to enter it up in the relevant space. The results were then compared, only to find that a full week for one had been a dull week for another, and only the week that contained the school sports day seemed to unite them in their recording. This work intrigued the children and led on to a study of how historical records of whole communities come to be formed; it also intrigued us, for it showed that one could begin to work with children of nine and ten years of age on questions of time in some intellectually honest way.

It struck us forcibly that drama presented to children a remarkably faithful model of historical time: it happened at life-rate, was unplanned and often surprising, was sometimes slow and sometimes fast. Since that piece of work, we have tended to emphasise the temporal element in our drama, with some useful results, for it has become clear to us that the children we have taught did not previously realise that history happened in the same kind of time they themselves were living through. This exciting discovery lent an interesting glitter of reality to their written work, with expressions such as ' I must hurry if I am to save him ' coming over with real conviction.

We would hold that the stirring of the imagination in this context of reality is one of the finest contributions that history or drama can make to the curriculum at large, for it shows to a child the relationship of what he is learning to what he is experiencing, and gives him the key to use his learning in real life. As fantasy escapes from real life, so imagination clings to and enhances it, making it not only comprehensible but also richer and more satisfying.

CHAPTER NINE

Drama and history in action

ONE OF THE most common responses to descriptions of our work is ' Yes, that's fine for the younger children, and the less intelligent, but my brighter older ones haven't time to play about '. Naturally, we have not been pleased by such a response, but we were very glad indeed when two history teachers at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, offered us the chance to work with two groups of twelve to thirteen year old children for a substantial part of a term. Here were some selected children who might normally expect a very different kind of curriculum from the one we would provide: how would they face up to it?

We took as a general theme the relationship of a courtier to his prince, concentrating for our source material on the quarrel between Henry VIII and Thomas More. Our first task was to build up a feeling for the type of work we intended doing, and then to equip the children with the necessary tools. They would need to know how difficult it is for the historian to find out about the past, and how complex and baffling true pictures of society are; they would need to explore feelings and how feelings in others are perceived. No easy task that we were setting them, and all would depend on how they took it.

We planned a very careful start: for each class a king would appear—John for the first class, Ray for the second. It would be a new king, just coming to his throne, and he would meet with his father's council. As the first meeting progressed we would ask each councillor to make a number of entries in a diary saying how he felt in relation to the new king, and to his colleagues.

The first class proved very bubbly and excitable, thoroughly enjoying their new work, but prone to a rather wild approach. Their king as a result turned out a somewhat domineering type, an angry

man, and they seemed to like it this way. They carefully filled out their diaries as the new king chose from their midst his new councillors, and soon one of them began to liven things up with a treason plot. He was discovered in the nick of time, and imprisoned to universal satisfaction. At the end of the meeting Ray took over to examine the diaries, and we found, as expected, some very conflicting reports.

The second class was taught much the same lesson, though with a very different king. The children were much quieter and more serious minded, enjoying grandiose language and dramatic ideas. Ray entered as a blind king, stumbling and shouting roughly for assistance—calling the boy who ran to his aid a fool for not coming earlier. The class stared hard, and Ray now demanded ' eyes ' for he could not rule without them. No one wanted to thrust themselves forward, and they felt strange and lost in a situation where it was no good putting hands up; eventually one boy moved out and said he would be the king's eyes. At this point the first diary entry was made. Ray then called for his treasury, and two boys brought over a box of books for the king to feel his money—he did not trust anyone, not even his ' eyes '. The children were revolted at such an attitude and stood up, craning to see. The second diary entry was now called for.

Ray now sent his ' eyes ' round the class to read the diaries, to check that people were not writing bad things about him. The children were even more shocked, and the third diary entry was called for. The search produced at least one suspicious character, who was tried at the bar of the court. Ray now called upon his ' eyes ' to choose an inner council, giving him wide discretion in this task. The class clearly thought he was becoming too powerful, and the fourth diary entry was called for. Finally, the king held an urgent *sotto voce* council meeting with this new inner circle, which all others strained to overhear. The final diary entry was made.

Thus both classes had produced a similar archive, and in the following session the diaries were exchanged between the classes, the explanation being that a spy in this foreign court had managed to sweep up all the personal notes of the councillors as they flocked out to cheer the new king after his first grand council meeting. The roles of the previous week were carefully maintained, and the great ' scoop ' was subjected to careful processing in both courts: what could the evidence tell of the new king, and how can we be sure?

Some children showed a natural affinity for this sort of work, checking the congruence between evidences and isolating and beginning to explain contradictions. The second class, asked to draft instructions for the ambassador, made an excellent job of it, putting in searching questions that would resolve contradictions in evidence and fill gaps: 'Test the limits of his patience and temper without making it obvious you are provoking him on purpose. But whilst doing this do not get yourself removed from his council. Make drawings of him which are accurate and neat. Make a few suggestions which may test out how wise he is in court . . .'

This work of the second class was so productive that we felt it should continue along the same lines for a while, though the first class demanded a faster pace, and should probably meet up with an historical circumstance. Thus the first class was now put entirely into role. We were, for this lesson, to work in a hall with a stage at one end, and we set some chairs grouped in two parts on either side of a throne at the other.

Ray took the whole group bar one boy, who was asked to stay with John. He was to be the central character of More, and had been chosen quite at random. We were to find out in future lessons that this was a bad mistake, but this did not become clear at this stage, and John explained that whatever happened to him in the lesson he would have throughout his special protection.

Ray began by sketching out a scene—a hot summer day, and the court had been called to Hampton. There on the stage they sat in an ante-chamber, waiting to be called, and if they looked out of the window they might see the king in the garden. At this point John took a walk, leaning heavily on 'More's' shoulder, and limping a little, though laughing gaily. Then suddenly, as if More had spoken some obscene imprecation, John thrust him away and turned angrily to call up his courtiers.

Each one of the children had the name of a man who might well have been at court in the early fifteen thirties, but knew little about him. As they came down from the stage John greeted them firmly, and often physically—a warm handclasp for supporters, the tips of the fingers presented to the chest of the conservative opposition. Each one received a number of clues about himself in the greeting; thus Latimer came in to a friendly hand on the shoulder and 'My dear Hugh, it is good to see you, this land needs scholars and teachers, and we have no better'.

This was a long process, and as the children settled behind John in the court they found it a shade tedious, but it was necessary in form, and the long walk to meet the prince was an experience each individual had to have. At last John turned to business: it had been on their advice that the king had accepted More as lord chancellor, they had told him that he was the wisest, most popular and most honest man, and they had been right. But now he went against the prince's will and that was insufferable. He must go, they must find a way of ridding him from the royal court; but let no man, no foolish fellow, try these Italianate tricks of midnight murder, no poniarding or subtle drops of poison. This man has done no wrong, and the world knows it. The king could not afford such an unsubtle resolution of his problem; nonetheless, More must go.

John now left the group and retired 'indoors' for a quarter of an hour, sitting out with More, whilst groups of children discussed the problem. To his great surprise one member of the court, taking the part of Roper, More's son-in-law, came high-stepping over to the king and explained that he saw no reason why More should get the sack. John proceeded to warn him in no uncertain terms in what a dangerous plight he now lay for daring such insolence, but he did not bat an eyelid, so the king moved on gruffly to saying that he would amuse himself with this youngster, puffed up like some proud pigeon—let him go back to the courtiers (amongst whom he had no real place, he was reminded), and see how many fools he could find to make the number greater than one.

After a while the king moved back to his throne, and listened gravely to a series of suggestions from various courtiers, mostly of a kind the KGB would smile at with a glance of recognition. Then up stepped Roper, speaking well and powerfully, though the king rebuked him, telling him to watch the balance of his empty head. Yet he pressed on, determined to show the force of his case.

As the king looked round the court he saw that Roper would win a majority, and the interesting situation arose that More would be given his safety in this lesson. The king finally spoke of those courts whereof no records are kept, no words spoken, where the courtiers have washed their memory white lest it should redden in a traitor's blood. This was to be such a court, and all was as before. The king was advised, so now he left.

This lesson was most interesting in that it went against history

in a number of respects because of the leadership of one boy, who had learned much that day. It had helped the others too, for afterwards they spoke and wrote feelingly of the dangers and unpredictability of life at court. The one who now stood in greatest danger was More, who *had* to rule as lord chancellor now, and satisfy the part his son-in-law had created for him. He was forewarned that next week he would play a large part.

The second class were by no means finished with the blind king, and clearly they wanted to explore ambassadors as well as courtiers. Thus, when they entered Ray was on a couch far away on the stage, and John instructed his 'eyes' to go alone to take counsel of the blind king. A very long whispered conversation ensued in which the 'eyes' was told that the king was ill, that it was not serious, but somehow shameful—he could neither appear nor admit to being ill. The 'eyes' must get on with normal business until the king could return, but he must on no account reveal what he now knew. The boy showed excellent powers, and took charge of a council meeting readily and easily, and could have gone on executing the nation's business for some time had not John appeared as a foreign ambassador wishing to see the king.

John demanded to speak with the king alone, his message from his king was in his head, and if he spoke it to one less than king he stood to lose that same head. This forced a most embarrassing impasse, in which the ambassador kept asking where the king was then whilst the courtiers tried to defend their position by challenging his credentials. Eventually, they agreed that the king's 'eyes' should be nominated vice-king, and they would sign a paper to this effect if John would treat with him.

As they signed, they knew that it was treason, but there was no other way out. They insisted that the ambassador should sign too, so that he would be implicated, that the paper should be deposited with one of the council men and that he should travel with it and the ambassador back to his own country, where he would show it to the king in proof of the ambassador's story and then destroy it.

They had sweated hard over this treason, and over the covering of their tracks, so now the ambassador gave his message and left them to discuss it, taking four councillors to dine with him. He at once offered them large sums of money if they would act in his country's interest in the council, and they happily agreed to this,

going straight back to the rest of the council to tell the whole story at once.

The ambassador was now recalled to stand before a thunderously angry council: was it true he had a bag of gold under the stairs in his lodgings to pay for the spies? Of course not, replied the ambassador, and bade them search for it, comfortably assured that there was no bag there. Yet the seachers managed to produce a bag: it was marked 'Leeds United' and, with remarkable skill, the 'eyes' managed to flit out of role to joke 'we had not thought you played at football', and straight back in again with vicious denunciations of undiplomatic conduct.

The ambassador was now hard pressed indeed, and only made his escape unscathed by emphasising the laws of diplomatic immunity. At this point the blind king made a recovery, and called for his 'eyes', who led him gravely back to a court that was really very glad to see him—they had had to sweat without him, and they felt a renewed respect for the crown as a result. He listened carefully to their account of what had happened in his absence, and soon discovered the act of treason. They had not done well, he was disappointed in them, and must take thought what he should do.

This was a particularly moving lesson, in that the children were learning at a racing pace, and enjoying high drama at the same time. Afterwards a number of them commented on the difficulties of being responsible, the complexities and dangers of life in a sixteenth-century court. Above all they saw the king as something much more than a man in charge—there was just a trace of understanding of the holiness of kingship there that day.

After two such exciting and fruitful lessons, the reader will not be surprised to find that the following week was an almost unmitigated disaster! The first class were initially concerned to find out more about their characters, and we had the relevant sections of the *Dictionary of national biography* ready for them to consult at will. Their mood had changed in the course of the week, and as they worked more into the skins of their characters they felt more and more prone to support Henry rather than the More they had saved so dramatically the last lesson. It was pointed out to them that after the court's decision to support More he must now be allowed to rule, and so the king would leave for Windsor with a few close friends to consider the question of legitimating Henry Fitzroy, confident that More could deal with the rest of the government.

He could not, nor could the remainder of the children, believe in his rule, and as sillier and sillier messages came through to the king in another part of the building it became obvious that it was time to go to the rescue. More was clearly losing control, and the remainder were in a very stupid mood. The king spoke sharply and firmly about the madness that comes at plague time, and generally began to settle things down. It was a depressing session, and a warning to all not to put too great a stress on any one child. The boy who was More must now be ' made safe ' but he and the others could forget their common failure easily.

The second class, not prone to sparks in any case, began to rationalise out what they had learned so far about the functions of a courtier and prepared some most interesting and useful statements. Now we wanted them to use this learning in a specific historical situation so, being short of time, John told them about Thomas More and his problem. He was succinct, simple and interesting and, for all that, had a very bad effect indeed. A class that had felt liberated into action by last week's lesson was now being subjugated by a history teacher again. We both went home unhappy that day.

In the lesson that followed we took up a rather more discursive than dramatic role, and began to consider the ways in which leaders are chosen, considering subjects within the boys' own range of experience first, but moving out and back into our court situation. Ray used a remarkably interesting and forceful technique at this stage: he had prepared a fairly detailed chart containing information about a sixteenth-century court, and the children turned to examine this; but after a very few seconds Ray said ' No that won't do—it's no good ' and crumpled it up into a ball. The children were shocked into a new kind of awareness—so much hard work wasted!—and were now ready to join in a much more serious attempt to sort out the questions. If Ray's beautiful chart was no good, then lots of work had to be done.

They began to work out certain qualities of experience a courtier might possess, which would qualify him for power—having been on embassy, for example, or having a law degree. They now separated out to discuss the relative merits of the various types of experience listed, being warned that they would soon have to present advice to the king on how to choose a new lord chancellor. This they did, albeit hurriedly, at the end of the lesson, and the advice proffered was sound and thoughtful.

The second class now spent some time contending with John as More in prison. Their aim was established by Ray as their king—they must get a signature to the oath of supremacy from More. This presented them with a big challenge, and they tried endless arguments, a certain number of mild threats and promises before resorting to low trickery. They produced a quite different document for More to sign, and attached the signature to the supremacy oath. Very delighted with themselves they rushed with their trophy to the king, who at once ordered More's release. John hurried to court to find out why he had been so suddenly released—great clemency on the king's part, or something deeper? When he saw the document he grabbed at it to destroy it, and said he would travel to every part of the land to explain to people that he had been tricked into signing. The king grew angry with his courtiers and packed More off to prison again. There had been foolish bungling—things were not done like that. We now came out of role for discussion, and it was clear that the children felt a little confused, though they had learned a great deal, so John asked them whether they would like to know what really happened to More, and they happily agreed. There was a remarkable difference between their reception of information in this context from the previous lesson—here the information was coming at the request of the children, and was rightly placed in answer to a problem.

Our time with these children was now drawing to a close—examinations loomed ahead; and because of this we thought to give a little test ourselves. It came in two parts, the first somewhat formal (for us) and the second a loose, free-flowing discussion. The formal test consisted very simply in putting the children into role as pro-More courtiers and asking them to devise several plans to help him, none of which should harm themselves, or cause trouble for fellow courtiers. When they had written several plans they were asked to select the best, and state why they thought it the best.

Now they were told a ' fresh piece of news '—a foreign king had written to Henry warning him not to execute More; the children were asked whether this action would in any way affect their plans, and how. Then further information was leaked—the king was to execute a man who had once been a close friend, and now Fisher and More stood out alone. Again the children were asked to note any changes in their plan that this would necessitate.

Now these papers could not be ' marked ' in any conventional

manner, so what we did was to search for evidence of: *a* empathy; *b* ability to incorporate our knowledge to clarify and enlarge a situation; *c* thoughtfulness in producing plans that were logical and fact-related rather than fantastic, and; *d* persistence.

The results were most interesting, indicating strengths in *a* and *b*, and to a degree in *d;* a good number of children were still indulging in largely fantastic notions, however (unless it was us who had implanted this behaviour). What was most interesting was their very clear notion of the time scale involved, a strong empathetic feel for action—many of them wrote things like ' I must hurry now, or I shall not be able to complete my plan ' indicating a deeper understanding than some of the fantastic plans might suggest on their own.

Yet it was in the looser and less directive discussions in the final lesson that one learnt more of the true effects of the work done. It was clear in the first place that they had all enjoyed themselves and therefore felt a little dubious about the activity: ' Is it actually history? ' queried one thoughtful boy, whilst another was more blunt—' Quite good fun, but it won't help with our exams, will it? ' Plainly the spectre of O-level lay heavy over them, and their ethic indicated that work should not really be nice. In an interesting discussion on behaviour the children of the first class made it plain that they felt we should have been stricter with them (remembering the lesson when More was ruling, no doubt). We discussed this at some length, and moved from a position of one boy sagely counselling John ' You should have given detentions—everyone else does ' to a point when a good few members of the class realised that this was no answer, at least in drama based work.

They enjoyed particularly the participation, though they suspected that some idle souls simply did not participate (actually we noticed few persistent lead-swingers, though individual children ' dropped out ' and in again on a number of occasions—a behaviour we are both quite prepared to accept). When asked what they had learned they produced some clear responses; there follows a fairly representative sample:

' How people behaved in those days.' ' How people behave under pressure.' ' The sort of decisions that courtiers had to make.' ' I discovered what a tough world it was then, for example executions and things.' ' Learning history from books doesn't bring out the pressures which make a person do what he does '.

They frequently used the word 'pressure' in the final discussions, and it is true that this was the symbol of life for them at court in the sixteenth century. We began to relate this up with the modern world, a colleague bringing material from Nazi Germany to show the pressures of life for ordinary people there. It is possible that these children now know a little about the pressure of events, the pressure of decision-making that they could have learned in no other way.

APPENDIX A

Some notes on team teaching

Much of the school work used to illustrate this book has been the product of team teaching between the authors. We have learnt much from working together and, although this appendix is based upon our own unique experiences, we hope that our readers will find some of it generally relevant to their own particular situation.

When teachers join forces in a team they cannot fail to become actively aware of each other's teaching personalities. Teachers working on their own may be aware of their colleague's teaching styles from such clues as noise from the next classroom, common room conversation, snippets of pupil chatter, and work on the classroom walls. Sometimes this may cause interest, sometimes mild annoyance, but whilst teachers are separated by partitions they are not greatly concerned by their colleagues' teaching personalities. However, once the partitions are removed in the interests of a team teaching venture, all members of the team take a much more active interest in this matter.

The partners in a team may consist of people whose age, teaching experience, academic backgrounds and teaching priorities are vastly different. Such differences can either make for some fairly high barriers which hinder cooperative teaching or they can form the basic ingredients for a richly constituted teaching team, rewarding for both teachers and pupils. In our own case we came together as a team with little difference in age, but with widely different teaching experience and academic background. However, we shared very similar priorities as teachers—our attitudes to learners, whether school children or students, were based upon a belief in the importance of discovery-based learning and both of us valued their statements more than our own as a basis for the next stage of learning.

Both of us attached considerable importance to the task of improving our skills in the reading and de-coding of verbal and non-verbal signals that flash around any active classroom and we were willing to abandon our teaching plans if it became apparent that they were rendered inappropriate by the mood or stage of understanding of the learners. From our experience, it seems clear that this sharing of similar learning priorities amongst members of a team is of fundamental importance. Given such agreement, we have found that our different teaching and academic backgrounds are an asset in constructing more varied and imaginative learning strategies than could have been achieved when we were working on our own.

We do not want to suggest that cooperative teaching is quickly or easily achieved just by bringing together teachers with similar learning priorities. Normally teachers plan their lessons and teach them on their own, and the success or failure of a lesson belongs solely to the individual teacher. With experience, planning can be speeded up and the planning and execution of a lesson appears to have a clockwork precision in the hands of a skilled teacher. If the same person joins a team, both planning and the execution of the lesson may at first suffer. We found that our early team teaching lessons took large amounts of planning time and often resulted in teaching that lacked both the sparkle and the efficiency to be observed when we were working separately.

We quickly discovered in our planning sessions that we approached this very basic task quite differently. Whereas Ray liked to plan a lesson in some detail so that he could see a possible outline development of the whole session, with the potential growth points charted—points where a range of possibilities might be taken up by the pupils—John preferred a much more open situation in which the first few minutes were planned meticulously, but no more. As we taught together this difference of approach became clear. John worked intuitively and thrived in a situation where the pressure of events—a class in front of him—bore closely down upon him. Ray would find such a situation an ideal formula for panic and therefore one to be avoided at all costs. In the initial stages of our planning for team teaching, this difference of approach caused some frustration and we found it necessary to examine in some detail two general questions: how much planning is necessary to provide a minimum feeling of security for one member of the team; and at

what point does the other member of the team find himself hemmed in and restricted by planning?

It would be all too easy to write that we reached a compromise, and to pass on, but in team teaching the nature of the compromise arrived at is very important indeed: a bully can impose a compromise, and an insensitive ass can assume one; a true compromise must be agreed. Thus we had to struggle through many planning sessions at cross-purposes, and had to spend considerable amounts of time analysing exactly why we were making a particular bid in a planning meeting. John might demand a story at the beginning, and Ray might resist such a suggestion, for example, and then came the long process of working out why we had made these moves: John is good at telling stories, and enjoys doing such work—it allows him to set a snappy pace and test the mood of the children by their reactions. Ray feels that to give too much at the start of a lesson sets a dominant pattern of teacher control, almost instruction, and he needs to talk with children to get their mood and ideas. Thus we move forward a little—no story at the start, but we must have a snappy pace, and John must be in a role to receive visual signals, whilst Ray is in receipt of the verbal. John must have some room in the lesson to talk with children, Ray must have some room to listen to them. So a compromise is reached, but not a negative one—much more a dynamic compromise that in itself suggests a lesson format.

We came a long way towards solving our planning problem by paying attention to the particular roles we were best suited to take in the lesson. After a little time working together it was possible to list the relative strengths of each member of the team and then to build these areas of strength into our teaching.

Thus we agreed that Ray would usually start off the lesson and structure the first part of the learning activity. He would provide an outline shape for the whole lesson and lead off discussions with the pupils at the end of role-play activities. John would take up a role in drama situations, tell a story or narrative at times when that seemed appropriate, provide factual background and information when required and select from his general knowledge of history the most relevant and telling episodes to illustrate occasions that required the light and shade of what really happened. It would be misleading to suggest that we always specialise in this way. John frequently leads discussions and Ray often takes a role in drama learning situations, but from experience we are beginning to relate areas of

strength to the likely demands of the particular lesson and, of course, by watching one another we learn how to improve areas of relative weakness.

A very large problem remains with us in role-taking: whilst Ray is happy to enter a discussion in which children lead, and to work on relatively equal terms with them, John carries into the classroom a crippling weight of historical knowledge which years of training has won him. The role of the 'man who knows the answers' is a difficult one to manage in two ways: it is difficult not to give the answers if you know them, though the answer being searched for may be much more deep than a simple factual response you may so readily make. Thus, children being asked 'can you tell me some of the different kinds of fear that man has felt in his past?' may turn happily to the 'fact man' for some interesting and diverting answers, and society that pays so much respect to men weighed down by facts (even in quiz games) will approve their action. But the children will have done little learning, and the learned man may have done great harm. This is a problem primarily of role control, but it is one of the biggest in our little team.

We now plan so that our lessons contain a careful and thoroughly worked out beginning, planned down to the wording of the first few remarks, with possible alternative openings if we are working with a new class; a skeleton outline of the whole lesson with a careful charting of points in the lesson when the class might take up one of any number of alternative possibilities; and a carefully selected object or picture if it appears that a physical starting point would be useful. We strictly limit the number of objects or pictures to be used and place quality before quantity as a guiding principle. This arrangement gives security to the 'planner' but an open framework to the other member of the team who knows that he will deal with those moments in the lesson when an intuitive move is required.

Most of our team teaching is done together—both of us working in the same room although we sometimes split the class into two groups. Thus we see one another in action and have the chance to observe in detail aspects of each other's teaching style. One of the most striking differences we observed was in the pace of the lesson that the other favoured. On our own we should probably have thought little of this matter, until John commented upon the slow pace of the lesson being led by Ray. Pace has nothing to do with the speed of the teacher's voice or the rapidity of the pupils' movements;

as we use it here it refers to such matters as the thinking time the pupils are given to answer questions or make decisions, the time allowed pupils to grow into a new idea or prepare for a new learning activity, the amount of time the teacher will spend with his pupils on wide ranging thinking and on generating a range of possible solutions to a problem. John normally enjoys a quicker pace, not one that denies pupils time for thought and reflection, but one that builds up a tension in a learning situation productive of excitement in learning. We have learnt from one another that most good lessons benefit from variation in pace and, as a result, we found that we needed to modify the number and range of ideas it was possible to explore in one lesson. For John this meant that he had to reduce his normal expectation of the length of the learning journey that could take place in a lesson, whereas Ray found that more discrimination in discussion of ideas and suggestions was productive of faster, but no less thorough learning. Ray found that John's observation concerning his pace led to far more satisfying teaching when the lesson periods were short—forty five minutes or under—because a quicker pace allows pupils to achieve a more satisfying goal by the end of the lesson. Generally speaking, it seems true that teachers can learn a good deal more about their teaching style when they work cooperatively and this means not only a recognition of weaker areas of their teaching but also more awareness of strengths.

The reader will have recognised from the main part of the book that our team teaching usually places us closely together as a team. We rarely function for a whole lesson when our contributions are entirely separate, with one of us standing at the back of the room waiting for the other to finish before 'he comes in'. More often than not we work intuitively, joining in a learning activity or taking over from one another according to no prearranged plan, but as the developing learning situation requires. This is probably essential, for most lessons are structured to give the learner maximum flexibility in directing the lines of development. The demands of such lessons upon the team are considerable because there is the danger of members of the teaching team doing nothing for fear of treading upon the toes of their colleagues, or of jumping in too soon and achieving nothing more than the confusion of the pupils. We find that most pupils welcome the novelty of working with two teachers provided they feel a mutual support of the teachers. Bad timing or

insensitivity on the part of one teacher can quickly confuse pupils and lead to chaos. On several occasions we have landed ourselves in disaster and on reflection after the lesson it is possible to detect the cause of the disaster in our uncertainty about the intentions of the other person. Our experience has taught us that it is necessary that each of us has to recognise with certainty which one is ' in charge ' of the lesson at any time. The handing over of the lesson from one of us to the other is dictated not so much by pre-planning as by recognition of the moment when the skill and experience of the other is likely to provide a fresh angle or new impetus to the lesson. Although we are often working together with the class—perhaps in role-play—each of us knows who is ' in charge '. It seems likely that the best team teaching in the classroom relies very heavily upon the teachers' intuitive skills and, in our experience, these are based upon mutual respect amongst the team, sensitivity to the needs of the moment, and a recognition of the particular skills possessed by each member of the team.

This ' being in charge ' effect grows fairly naturally as the team settles down and examines its experience, but it can be helped on its way artificially. After a series of quite hair-raising mistakes with a class (including a situation in which John effectively broke up a piece of very fine learning involving fifty very committed children because someone had asked whether they should follow the instructions of the break bell) we tended to move into situations where, when we were both in role, one was clearly in a superior role. This helped considerably as the children naturally turned to the one who was leading at the time, and he could instruct his assistant quite clearly without moving out of role. We don't need that particular ruse now, and are quite prepared to catch the ball neatly, but there was a time when we were thankful to do the safer thing.

We have found that one of the most important tasks at the end of a team teaching lesson is the evaluation session. We endeavour to do this as soon as possible after the lesson whilst memories are more reliable. We attempt to note down briefly as much as possible to provide us with a starting point for our discussions for the next planning session—usually a week separates one lesson with a class from the next. Our top priority, in these evaluation sessions, is to establish some agreement between ourselves on the needs of the class for the next lesson. Sometimes we have ended a lesson by asking the class to prepare some material, or to think about a

question that has been raised during the lesson. This must not be forgotten and must be included at the beginning of next lesson. At other times we may need to remember the interests of an individual pupil who has suddenly shown a dawning recognition of an idea and will need support in developing the idea further. After some of the lessons we knew that the next lesson had to continue a role-play activity because the pupils of the class had invested so much enthusiasm and involvement in what they were doing. The obvious signals of other lessons may tell us that we have almost lost the interest of the pupils and the next lesson must approach the topic under consideration from a fresh angle. It is very helpful to have two opinions on a lesson and, although both of us are involved in the lesson most of the time, it is usually possible for the one not leading at the time to pick up clues missed by the leader. For this purpose we try to position ourselves in different parts of the room—never at the back of the room where few faces can be seen—so that we have different visual angles on the class.

That we have learnt from one another is quite clear, and we feel sure that our teaching—that done alone as well as in team work—has improved because of the association. Clearly the children we teach together benefit largely from having two personalities, very different in nature, to turn to. Two teachers are clearly better than one. We have had some very fine sessions team teaching, and, were we never to join another teacher in a learning situation again, our whole attitude to our work, our skills and techniques would remain radically altered for the better. Team teaching makes better teachers, whatever else you say about it.

APPENDIX B

Discussion: an example by Robin MacGibbon

We feel strongly about the place of discussion in education, and so we put out our chapter to an expert for comments. These proved so useful we have asked him to provide an example of what he means. We hope that this will not only afford an enlargement of our theme, but also an example of a very different teaching style that nevertheless we see as being in conformity with ours.

INTRODUCTION

We first had a tentative chat about the possibility of making our own colour slides, then thought that we might write our own poems or prose, collect relevant pop songs and record them, make our own music, read other people's writings, and somehow create an edited programme on tape to synchronise with the slides.

The work involved a free exploration of the idea of loneliness which was basically suggested by me, but the approach was deliberately left open and decisions were to be taken by them at all stages. My choice of subject was by no means arbitrary (no pre-packed handouts on current social problems), nor was it in familiar academic territory; it was designed to coincide with their own growing-points and emotional responses, covering a wide range of feelings and tensions:—confidence/insecurity; social failure/personal success; individuality/ecentricity; conformity/non-conformity; acceptance/rejection; loneliness/solitude.

The discussions which follow inevitably refer to earlier work. From the teacher's point of view they provided a tactical way of judging the cumulative impact of all that we had shared together and it was invaluable to note the levels of individual contribution. Discussion itself was a vital part of the learning process.

Unfortunately any transcribed reproduction of the original discussion is incomplete because it oversimplifies and omits a number of essential observations which the teacher ' in the field ' must recognise if he is to improve his expertise.

BEFORE YOU SPEAK, LISTEN AND OBSERVE

1 A good deal of valuable learning had already taken place before and would happen after the recorded discussions. The informal exchange of ideas, sharing of decisions and the imprecise quality of the learning is not to be seen in the transcript.

2 We should consider the school. Examinations predominate, and suggest that real learning is passive note taking, obedient to an instructor. It cannot be helped, but it does de-value the learner, and indeed teachers, who try to suggest that the pupil's own contribution might be the basis of learning.

3 We should consider group dynamics. What influence does ' the hierarchy of speaking ' have on the individual's response? The transcript may clearly show who is doing all the talking. But what about the majority who, grey in mediocrity, may well be acutely hostile to the verbal fluency of others in the group, or may feel so inadequate that any personal contribution—especially on a ' risky ' subject—is nothing short of anguish? Better to keep quiet and slip into the easy role of the passive passenger. Does the transcript notice such people sufficiently? Their valid feelings, running strongly while discussion proceeds, are not accounted for. In fact the written version of the discussion looks all rather glib. The teacher actually in the classroom must note what is really happening and not be impressed by his own verbosity. It is also worth pointing out that since adolescents may be inclined to be ' prickly ', so they may be all the more easily ' put off ' or feel that they are being ' shut out ' by the teacher's skilful handling of the subject but inexpert handling of people. We forget in our concern for issues that we are dealing with people's feelings.

4 We must consider the teacher-pupil relationship. The transcript only hints at the quality of understanding and acceptance which all pupils have the right to expect. What we tend to forget is that the subject-matter is itself a reflection of the kind of trust which has been carefully developed. This is a very important matter since our approach to the subject is significantly subjective—we are not avoiding the ' meat ' of it by keeping it on a comfortably impersonal

plane, and thereby considering everyone else's experiences except our own. One of the boys refers to the fact that it is ' too personal ' and another has pointed out how we have scrupulously avoided mentioning specific personalities.

More subtly, the transcript does not reveal the extent to which the teacher may or may not understand himself. Here, too, there is a current of feeling running parallel with the text. What range of known feelings is the teacher going through while the discussion is taking place? There are undoubtedly prejudices (an overzealous pressing forward with what one considers ' best ', so that the pupils' good ideas are not acknowledged or pursued). How do I deal with my own embarrassments, personal preferences and irritations with X's personality? Putting it another way, those kids are having to put up with a good deal in us. From a professional point of view—the only one possible—we should be on our guard in case we allow our feelings to get between the pupils' contribution and our own, so that we end up not listening sensitively.

5 We should consider the less obvious forms of communication. Non-verbal signals and body language—these we ignore at our peril. We should note the quality and extent of the pupils' ' eye-contact ', their sitting position (in relation to us); nods, grunts and other movements all serve to indicate the extent of the pupils' commitment. The purely verbal representation of the discussion naturally does not reveal these forms of contact—the non-verbal effort of holding or trying to gain someone's attention is well known to all teachers. It is not merely a matter of knowing that all these primitive contacts are going on; we need to be deeply conscious of their significant influence and weight in the learning situation. If we can develop the skill of interpreting behaviour and ' readiness ' by being sensitive to this constant supply of unforced signals, then we should use them to judge what someone is feeling and the seriousness of that feeling. If the class is ' mixed ', then what statement is being made when we observe that the girls sit on one side and the boys on the other? Surely we should attempt to capitalise on the emotional and sexual tensions which that behaviour exposes; that is the relevant growing-point and that is the starting-point. It is through observation that discussion can proceed. The Sixth Formers ' broke ranks ' and only slowly left their formal setting of their desks behind which they had always taken refuge. The statement here was that they wanted to ' play safe ' and to ' start from the point that we

know', rather than immediately work themselves into a less familiar context.

OTHER NON-VERBAL CONSIDERATIONS

The transcript does not convey the sense of urgency—that indefinable feeling, acknowledged on both sides, that there is a continuing 'tension' which makes discussion such a vital learning process. Everyone who wants to make a verbal contribution is, in a sense, at some risk. If we do not risk an opinion or an expression of feeling, then our learning is less obvious and less perilous. The moment cannot be reproduced and the contribution is always original.

Equally important is the sense of effort—the sheer effort of thinking, allowing for pauses, tensions and silences, as in life, in which we are constantly assessing and weighing up points of view. We are learning to tolerate others and modify our own thinking whilst listening. The teacher must, therefore, expect all the untidiness of life. The neat transcript seems to contradict this, for a series of statements set down in logical order surely suggests that we all wait for each other to speak in turn. For that reason any reproduced discussion tends to omit the pace of delivery, the tactical timing of a question, the emphasis given to certain words, the stumbling for new meanings and the friendly tone of voice. Yet all these are part of a vital kind of listening and produce evidence which the teacher should be monitoring as the work progresses. The emphasis is rather less on what the teacher says and the responses he is conditioning, and rather more on the setting up of a productive situation in which learning may take place.

THE TEACHER'S VERBAL CONTRIBUTION

Much thought has been devoted to what the teacher says in this discussion; the reader may judge whether undue weight is given to his opinions, questions and statements, and whether he tends to monopolise. Others have already analysed the innumerable subdivisions of possible types of question: what seems important is that our recognition of these techniques cannot always be reduced to such an obvious and clinical analysis. It is important for us not to have our intellectual heads so completely turned that we forget that teaching involves coping with our feelings and the feelings of others, and that these are always running alongside our work, both

assisting and obscuring. At least we recognise that they are present and we can more readily appreciate the significance of applying our knowledge of identification, projection and empathy.

SOME HELPFUL VERBAL TECHNIQUES

1 Pulling back the subject after irrelevant discussion.
2 Asking questions which require detailed, original response.
3 Asking 'loaded' questions which help provide constructive answers.
4 Suggesting ideas for further material etc.
5 Clarifying terms within the discussion.
6 Relating earlier work (*eg* slides) to the discussion.
7 Providing an opportunity for instruction.
8 Supporting pupils' ideas (verbally and non-verbally).
9 Drawing on personal experience to clarify etc.
10 Helping to pursue a line of reasoning.

SOME UNHELPFUL TECHNIQUES

1 Pupils' ideas not pursued.
2 Discouraging remarks and even personal comment which 'downgrades'.
3 Ignoring pupils' ideas.
4 Talking too much.
5 Asking 'loaded' questions which give the responses that the teacher wants.
6 Not clarifying muddled thinking/failing to explain.
7 Allowing the discussion to drift or to go round in circles.
8 Making vague statements.
9 Using an informal situation as an excuse for personal indulgences.

THE SLIDES

They helped form a quick and memorable frame of references. The same boy dressed in distinctive yellow pullover was self-elected and effectively accentuated the idea of loneliness.

1 Trying to join in a game of cards (Two different playground shots).
2 Feeling different from other boys (Football in the junior yard).
3 Standing and watching others (Younger boys on athletics track).

4 Being alone with one's thoughts (Lone figure hunched against a wall).

5 Being in class and not taking part (Unconventional pose behind desk).

6 Being in class and feeling elsewhere is spirit (Empty desks in a field).

7 Feeling a sense of failure (Heavily scored work recently corrected).

8 Hanging one's head in shame (Poor exam result on the notice board).

9 Standing before a large audience (Fighting back nervousness —hall).

10 Feeling rejected by one's friends (Various shots of real and imagined barriers between people).

11 A lonely face at an upstairs window.

12 Feeling solitary and proud (A church steeple with/without boys).

13 The group crosses the road leaving one behind (Two differently angled shots).

14 A tree unlike any other tree.

15 Two chairs in the hall caught in a shaft of sunlight.

16 A lonely corridor without end or beginning.

THE DISCUSSION

(*Starts with the request for specific information from an individual . . . Pupils' recall of visual material . . . 'Open' starting point . . . 'Safe' area known to all the group . . . Elicits detached response in factual terms . . . Little personal identification at this early stage . . . Aesthetic considerations.*)

T: Well, Nick, which do you think was the most telling slide? (*A rather sophisticated phrase and not very stimulating.*)

B 1: The one where he's alone outside with a desk, staring vacantly up at the sky. There's no-one else around.

B 2: Surely, the one in the hall has the same effect as that: the one where we tried to get the sun on the . . . chairs . . .

B 1: Yes. I still feel there's something about being in the outside.

B 3: You know the one that comes across much more, the one that Nick's talking about, is because he's there, whereas the other

one is much more symbolic to do with chairs, showing the idea of loneliness. That's why I should imagine that one comes across much stronger than any of the other slides . . . the rest is all rather symbolic.

T: But, in our experience, which seems to be the most telling slide for us? (*Heavy pause . . . Teacher's use of the same difficult phrase again, then rephrased . . . Tactical switch to a new area with scope for more personal identification and openings for more deeply shared commitment.*) . . . the most obvious moment of loneliness?

B 1: The one where the subject is left out . . . one boy is separate from the others. (*Still a noticeably impersonal response, clinging to 'safe' territory.*)

T: Have you ever had that experience?

B 4: No. (*Still not ready to face such a direct question.*)

T: Have you ever felt left out when that happens? (*Either I wasn't listening, or I felt the need to repeat the question in the language of feeling.*)

B 4: As the poem (*MacNiece's 'The lake in the park'*) suggests . . . you feel more alone when you're left out with others around you . . . you don't when you're just by yourself . . .

B 1: You can be standing there and there's a group in front of you; some of them have got their backs to you, and they're all talking cheerfully to one another . . . and you don't know what to say, you can't butt in. (*A noticeably elaborate reply with confident and detailed reference to one of the slides.*)

B 4: You feel like butting in . . . but you feel you're not wanted or anything.

T: Yes. (*Strong support to encourage deeper content.*)

B 2: I personally like being alone at times . . . sometimes it's really a pleasure.

B 4: Hmm. (*Doubt with this new idea.*)

B 2: There are other times it's so annoying it makes you feel . . . (*Tentative expression of deeper feeling missed by teacher's insatiable liking for semantic quibbles . . . How fitting it is to make these distinctions if they don't further personal commitment?*)

T: But there's a difference between solitude and loneliness.

B 3: The idea that we're trying to get over on this tape . . . that you're alone because you want to be but because you're forced out . . . we've all got to be alone at some time or another . . . (*Valuable ideas and more preparedness to say what 'we' want.*)

T: Yes, I agree with that. Loneliness is something we've all got to put up with. We all like to have solitude, but I don't know that we all like loneliness.

B 5: . . . we don't mind being alone . . . solitude . . . but not ignored . . . which is a major part of it. (*Valuable contribution which concerns 'feeling' rather than abstractions . . . Note the groping quality of these emerging ideas.*)

T: Yes. Yes. (*Deep tones of sincere support.*)

B 3: Everyone likes their own way to a certain extent. (*What is he really saying? This could be a strong hint of the adolescent's crisis of identity . . . 'We are individuals but we aren't eccentrics, so where do we draw the line?'*)

Teacher suggests that we reconsider B 5's idea.

T: But being ignored is a terrible thing to have to come to terms with.

B 4: Yes. The thing is it's worse if you know the actual people.

T: Yes. (*B 4 didn't say that he's had this experience earlier in the discussion . . . Teacher often articulates ideas and feelings which can comfortingly reinforce pupils' own thinking.*)

B 4: Sometimes you go into a sort of place and you see all these new people and you don't feel so bad . . . but if you know the people . . . you can't really break in . . . it's worse . . . (*Teacher noting the reiteration of this sensitive area.*)

T: Yes. (*Helpful tone.*)

B 4: . . . inside . . . (*Almost inaudibly.*)

T: Yes, I can think of times when I've been left out of teams . . . I mean, why shouldn't I be left out of teams if there are people who are better than I am; but even so, even at that level, one feels really humiliated. (*Value of being an 'Aunt Sally'.*)

B 4: Yes . . . in front of others.

B 2: Yes . . . your friends as well. (*General assent.*)

T: Well . . . sorry . . . (*Teacher nearly over impatient to 'progress' without realising the importance of accepting the seemingly slow emergence of feeling and shared experience*) . . . you don't want to say things in case . . . (*Deliberately, gently and slowly allowing for them to interpose.*)

B 4: In case it's wrong . . . then you split into groups sometimes, all your friends in one group and you know they're sort of colleagues . . . the others . . . you feel sort of bad inside.

B 3: You don't really know what to say, do you?

B 1: No. Especially in front of your friends. (*Teacher must learn to be patient and to listen generously. Pupils obviously still need to worry this idea of social ease and to share commonly felt problems.*)

B 3: You always run the risk of speaking out . . . in the general wave of boys carrying on . . . (*All agree*) . . . You run the risk of either being the centre of attraction by doing it, or it goes the other way, you end up completely left out and alienated by them, see? So, I mean to say, if you break away at all and do something different, then you're left with these two things—you're left out or you end up copying them. (*By verbalising the idea he gets it clear for himself.*)

A LITTLE LATER

T: Do you think being lonely is really a sense of failure on your part, for having not worked successfully with people? Is it telling you that you're a failure when you're like that?

B 3: It shows that you're a social failure; it doesn't mean you're a complete and utter failure. It's your fault to a certain extent because you've got to learn to mix . . . and there's the person who's lonely . . . they steep themselves in self pity . . . and it's very much their own fault as well . . . you've got to adjust . . . (*B 3 interestingly oscillates between the impersonal 'they' and the personal 'you'. He shows an appreciation of one of the songs* I am a rock *and has the maturity to 'offer advice' to the group whilst at the same time learning for himself.*)

B 4: A lot of people put up their own barriers and they can't (?) break them down. (*Expresses B 3's ideas in his own terms. Finds it easier to refer to a new idea impersonally.*)

T: Have you had that feeling in any particular way? (*Helping him to avoid generalisation.*)

B 4: Um . . . yes . . . it's a club I used to belong to . . . (*The 'certain place' which he mentioned earlier when he was less prepared to involve himself.*) You know, I didn't mix with some sorts of people, talking about trivial topics all the time. . . .

T: It's easy to be snobbish about things. (*Hoping that he will see 'élitism' in this attitude to other people.*)

B 4: And then, when you want (*Emphasised*) to be with people, you know, it's too late, you've made a decision.

A LITTLE LATER

T: Why don't people talk about this more often? (*We consider that loneliness is something people will not admit to.*)

B 2: Well, in what subject could you talk about being alone? You just can't.

B 3: It's too personal to talk about and if you're still at school . . . schoolboys don't talk personally to each other . . . they talk on a superficial level . . . you'd rather talk about football scores rather than talk about being lonely . . . and also you might admit things that you didn't want to admit.

B 4: I don't think you like to embarrass other people by giving examples, which you'd have to do to show loneliness.

T: Well, we're very careful now, aren't we, to avoid being particular. We're generalising safely. (*Treading softly.*)

B 1: We're not saying that any of us are lonely. (*Bringing the feeling even closer to ourselves, reinforcing teacher's comment in his own terms.*)

T: No.

B 4: We wouldn't like to pinpoint any particular person. (*Now seeing the full significance of what we are saying to each other.*)

A LITTLE LATER

B 3: We're only at school to learn.

T: To learn what? (*Gently.*)

B 3: To educate yourself. (*Teacher still feels that the distinction is not clear.*)

B 3: In academic subjects mainly.

T: So, you're saying that there are other things which we could be learning, other than academic . . . (*Not really said by B 3 at all—wishful thinking . . . There's a sense of rush, the bell has gone . . . Education of this sort must finish . . . Pressures from outside . . . My urgent desire to retain communication in depth . . . Strong tendency now to formulate 'closed' questions.*)

B 3: You can learn them but you can't discuss them as you could, say, geography or maths or something like that.

T: And yet we're discussing them now.

B 4: Yes, well, in the sixth form there's a slight chance.

B 5: (*Whose few comments show how those who don't say much can still be following intently.*) I think we're discussing it now on a very superficial level. Loneliness is very much an emotional thing

and I think . . . um . . . more or less today the emotions are hidden . . . everything's talked of at superficial level.

B 1: You've only got to . . . (*Interrupted by teacher.*)

T: You think of any area of your emotional development, and it happens through what you call learning in spite of school, doesn't it? (*New idea which gets no immediate response but it sows a seed for B 2 . . . Teacher hurrying on ideas, not 'felt through' by pupils.*)

B 4: (*Unsure.*) Hmm.

T: You've got to learn some old how. You've got to get on with your emotions but there's no way into understanding yourself through lessons . . . about how it happens.

B 1: (*Embarrassed and hoping to shield himself from the value of his comment by 'downgrading' it.*) Another . . . and on a superficial level . . . the only person you'll discuss these things with is yourself.

B 2: You're not taught about things like that, are you? You just learn them. It comes naturally.

T: (*Pursuing his own line of reasoning and ignoring a difference of opinion.*) Do you think, then, that there's some part of school that's missing? (*Already suggested once but must allow for delayed action by trying again.*)

B 3: I think that most of us feel that part of what we are taught . . . is on a practical basis . . . we need to be taught or helped to discuss things like this . . . that you don't discuss . . . about loneliness . . . and I think that these slides will go some way to doing that, because that'll show that there's a need in school . . . for an emotional look at life.

T: Yes. (*Quietly and supportively.*)

B 2: But . . . is there a need? (*No time to take up this challenge . . . We can't assume agreement merely because we feel convinced ourselves.*)

B 4: It's the first time I've ever done anything on loneliness. We've never been given the chance before. (*A personal declaration coming after elaborating on his earlier generalised statements.*)

B 1: There's not time to learn at school. (*The last moments.*)

B 5: I think education today is responsible for removing a lot of the emotions out of people . . . (*Oh, to pursue this one!*)

T: Suppressing, but not removing . . . (*This moves us out of the area of feeling.*)

B 2: I'd say it was a very liberal . . . education . . . (*Door finally has to open.*)