



## Children & The 1916 Rising

### DRAMA

#### Introduction

These drama strategies will help the children to develop their language skills and to enrich their language and creative thinking.

#### Activity – Drama Activity

Show the children the stamp with the photograph of Sir Francis Fletcher-Vane and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington



#### Explain their part in the 1916 Rising

*'Many innocent civilians were killed during the rebellion but the story of Sir Francis Fletcher-Vane and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was one of the most well-known. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was a pacifist and was attempting to prevent looting by civilians when he was arrested and shot by Captain J. C. Bowen-Colthurst at Portobello Barracks. Major Vane was second in command at the barracks and when he tried to have Colthurst put under arrest for his actions he was dismissed, as his superiors tried to cover-up the army's involvement. However, Major Vane eventually was able to expose the truth of the killing of an innocent man.'*

\*For younger children you can adapt the story to make it more accessible.

Have a brief whole class discussion about the likely action of the three main characters in the above extract. The teacher will then use two drama strategies – *soundscape and thought-tracking* – to engage children with the story.



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#### Soundscape

- In groups of five/six, ask the children to discuss what sounds they think they would hear if they were in this story.
- Ask each group to pick one sound and create that sound vocally or through body percussion (if you have musical instruments these could also be used).
- Ask each group to perform individually and then together to create the atmosphere of the 1916 Rising.

#### Thought-tracking

- Ask one child from each group to join together to make a group which will provide the soundscape during the thought-tracking activity.
- In a suitable space, ask the rest of the class to choose a role from the above event (i.e. Major Vane, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Captain Colthurst, a rebel, a civilian, or British soldier. \*For younger children the teacher may wish to choose two main characters to focus on).
- The children walk around the space without talking but improvising movements and actions of their chosen character, while the soundscape group provides the sounds of the rebellion.
- After a short while, signal all the children to freeze. The teacher selects a few different pupils who in turn, frozen on the spot, but still in character, say their thoughts out loud. It could be something they see, hear, feel or smell e.g. 'I'm innocent', 'I'm only trying to find some food', 'I'm afraid the soldiers will see me', 'He looks like an Irish rebel, I hope he doesn't shoot me.' Ask the children to move around the space again and repeat at will.
- Children can take turns with the soundscape and thought-tracking.

#### Write about it!

##### For younger classes

Ask the children to discuss how they felt in their various roles during the drama activity. Then ask the children to do a simple portrait of one of the characters from the extract above and to write a few sentences about that character.

##### For older classes

Ask the children to discuss how they felt in their various roles during the drama activity and to write a short dialogue between any two of the main characters from the passage above. These dialogues will be used as scripts. The children, working in pairs, can read through each other's scripts and perform (in their pairs) to the class group or smaller groups as preferred.



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#### Suggested additional tasks

- Use the drama strategy of hot-seating in pairs, taking turns, assuming the characters of Sheehy-Skeffington and Colthurst.
- Read a children's story to the class, which is based on the 1916 Rising.
- Organise a visit to the **GPO Witness History Visitor Centre** [www.gpowitnesshistory.ie/visit/](http://www.gpowitnesshistory.ie/visit/) Ask the children to prepare questions for the visit.
- Enter the **An Post/INTO Handwriting Competition**. Use the writing activity above or get your pupils to write their own composition in any genre using the theme 'Children & The 1916 Rising'. For more information visit [www.anpostschoolbag.ie/competition](http://www.anpostschoolbag.ie/competition)

#### Curriculum links

##### History

- Study a range of people and events in the past in order to develop a balanced understanding of national history
- Communicate historical understanding in a variety of ways, using appropriate language and other techniques or media
- Develop an appreciation of the perspectives and motives of people in the past and accept that individuals and events should be understood in their historical context
- Be aware that the attitudes and behaviour of people may be influenced by their understanding of the past and by their past experiences
- Respect and value a range of opinions and acquire open, questioning attitudes to the beliefs, values and motivations of others

##### Drama

- Develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through cooperation with others
- Develop empathy with and understanding of others and the confidence needed to assume a role or character
- Develop personal adaptability, spontaneity, the ability to co-operate, verbal and non-verbal skills, and imagination and creativity, in order to ensure that the drama text reflects real life in a fresh and valid way
- Develop the ability to co-operate with others in solving, out of role, the problems that are presented in making the drama

##### English

- Learn to understand the conventions of oral language interaction and use oral language in a variety of social situations
- Express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations through talk, discussion and writing
- Develop and sustain imaginary situations through talk, discussion and improvisational drama