Drama Scheme of Work
Murder Mystery

This scheme of work should last for 2-3 lessons. It allows the pupils to be part of and try to solve a murder mystery. Pupils are encouraged to improvise and develop a character whilst trying to solve the crimes which are occurring around them! This scheme can be linked to a horror project, a crime topic or to writing original murder mystery stories.

AIMS:

to encourage pupils to develop a character and sustain a role throughout the sequence of activities
to focus on actions of others and own reactions to events
to enjoy solving a murder mystery through interviews and hot seating

SKILLS DEVELOPED:

whole group drama
group improvisation
role playing
mime
instant reaction to instructions
facial expression & body language
hot seating
powers of deduction!

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

This scheme of work should allow all pupils to develop their drama skills whilst enjoying the process of finding (or being) the murderer.
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Murder Mystery
(Adapted from Drama Structures: ‘The Haunted House’)

Warm up – walking around the room, showing various emotions, at different levels
(e.g. anger: level 1 =very mildly annoyed, level 10 = furious). End with fear.

Introduction

Teacher in role: Introduce yourself as Mr / Mrs Harvey. You have inherited a Manor House and want to sell it. However, because there are rumours that the house is haunted no-one is interested in buying it. You are offering £100 to people who will spend one night in the Manor House to prove that it is not haunted.

Activity 1

After the departure of Mr / Mrs Harvey pupils need to develop the character they will be playing throughout the rest of the drama. They will need to decide:

• name, age and occupation
• why they are interested in the offer (for example, they might need the money, curiosity about the house, an interest in haunted houses …)
• who they are with

Activity 2

At the Manor - mime entrance into the house. Concentrate on body language and facial expression.

Now is the time to explain to the group that strange things will start to happen, but make it clear to them that they must only do what they are instructed to do. If they receive an instruction, they must carry it out immediately, without questioning it.

In new groups (organized by teacher) discuss your situation. Where will you sleep? Why is Mr / Mrs Harvey not there? How will you cope with no electricity ...?

While they are rehearsing this sketch, hand out SECRET instructions to certain people. It is imperative that they operate in secret (see attached sheet 1).

The murderer should then be given his instructions. He is the dead uncle of Mr / Mrs Harvey and does not want the property to be sold as he enjoys haunting it. His instructions are as follows:
You are the murderer. You are the ghost of the dead uncle of Mrs Harvey. You don’t want her to sell the house so are killing people who are saying it isn’t haunted and people who are interested in buying it.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO KILL ANYONE – your teacher will decide upon your victims and instruct them to die.

If you are interviewed or hotseated, you can lie.

Activity 3

In rooms that night, in new groups. Pupils start to introduce themselves, when murders begin to happen.

When a murder occurs, the teacher stops all action and everyone gathers around the corpse. The teacher asks questions - Did anyone see anything? Was the victim acting strangely etc.

No solutions will be found and groups go back to improvisations.

NB. Once people are dead, they can help teacher to distribute notes. Warn the rest of group to ignore them.

Once 3 or 4 people are dead, call group together in a semi - circle. They can call people to be hot - seated to try to work out who is the murderer. Only the murderer can lie. Ghosts / victims can be hotseated. Teacher can influence questioning - e.g. Is it true that you were interested in purchasing the property? Do you believe that the property is haunted?

Can the group find any link between the murders?

The first set of interviews will probably not result in a solution so go back into groups, perhaps in new groups, meeting for a discussion on the murders.

Carry out two more murders, then call the group back together and try to reach a solution.

Narrow down the suspects through a process of elimination until you have 3 or 4. The group must now vote to decide who is the murderer.

The drama ends when the real murderer reveals him / herself and tells the group why they committed the murders.

Follow-up work

Writing police reports

The journey home, discussing their night in the haunted house.
You are being paid a large amount of money by a national newspaper to convince people that the house is haunted. You must try to persuade everyone you speak to - without being too obvious - that there is a ghost in the house. (You can bribe them if you feel this is appropriate).

You are being paid a large amount of money by Mr / Mrs Harvey to persuade people that the house is not haunted. You must try to convince the people you speak to - without being too obvious - that there are no such things as ghosts.

You believe that you keep seeing objects moving of their own accord and that everyone with black hair has blood on their hands. People will probably not believe you but you must try to convince them.

You have just written a novel which proves that ghosts cannot exist. Try to convince people who believe in ghosts that they are wrong.
You are the murderer. You are the ghost of the dead uncle of Mr / Mrs Harvey. You don’t want her to sell the house so are killing people who are saying it isn’t haunted and people who are interested in buying it.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO KILL ANYONE – your teacher will decide upon your victims and instruct them to die.

If you are interviewed or hotseated, you can lie.