

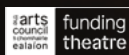


# A Pre-Show Drama Workshop Plan

BRANAR PRESENTS

# THE TABLE

*Written by Christian O'Reilly*  
*Directed by Marc Mac Lochlainn*



funding  
theatre



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

# CURRICULUM LINKS

## DRAMA

- Exploring and making drama
- Reflecting on drama
- Co-operating and communicating in making drama

## SPHE

- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others
- Resolving conflict
- Developing citizenship

## ENGLISH

- Oral Language: Exploring and Using
- Create narratives and retell stories and events, both real and imaginary, for various audiences, using imaginative and figurative language, elaborating where appropriate

This standalone drama class introduces the basics of telling stories through acting. Once the children have seen the show and read Branar's comic we're sure they'll make connections to its themes.

# INTRODUCTION

This is an acting workshop to introduce you to some of the ideas you'll be meeting in *The Table* by Branar being performed at The Peacock Theatre. We want to keep the play itself a surprise but we hope this class will help you think about some of its themes before you see it.

First we're going to look at 'oaths', something human beings have been doing ever since we started living

together. It's part of the big human story of how we give meaning to our lives.

Then we'll invent some stories of our own using drama and explore what they tell us about our own world.

Finally we'll see how changing some of the relationships in our dramas makes a difference to how they feel.

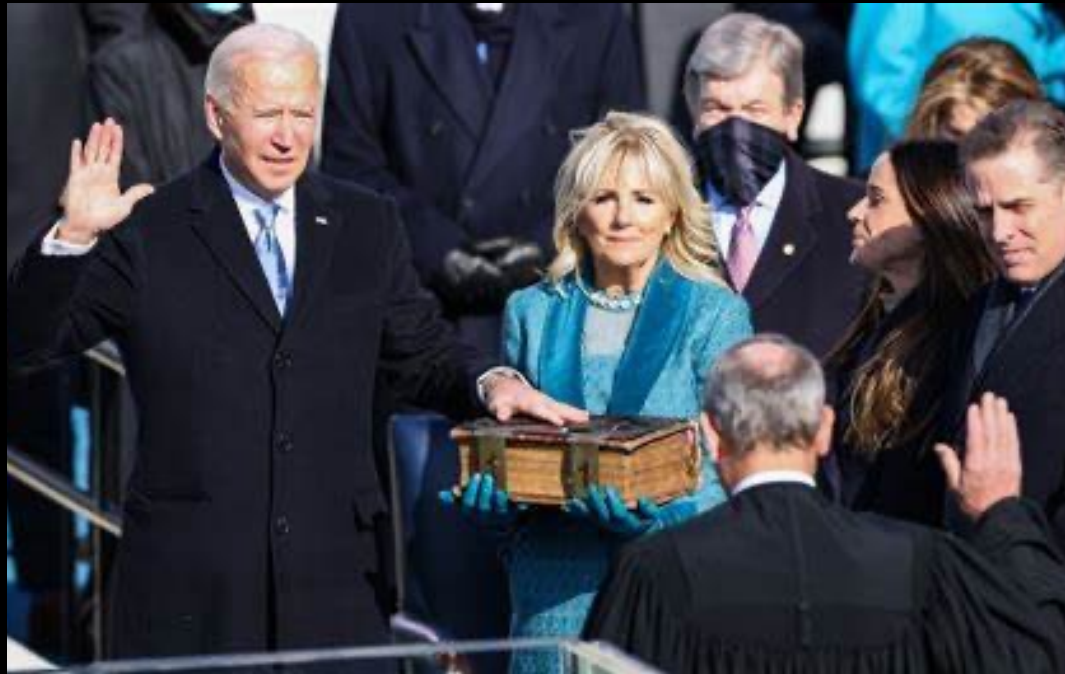
**STEP TWO**  
**5 MINUTES**

# TALKING ABOUT OATHS

## **PART ONE**

Show the class this picture and ask them what they think is going on.

- What do you see?
- What are the people doing with their hands?
- Who is it?
- Do you know what they are doing?



**STEP TWO**  
**5 MINUTES**

# TALKING ABOUT OATHS

## **PART TWO**

Now show them this one from an old film and ask them the following questions.

- Where have you heard people say *'I swear to tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth.'*
- What's happening in this picture?
- How is it the same as the other one and how is it different?  
(That they aren't famous people, ordinary people do it too under certain circumstances.)

[VIEW IMAGE HERE](#)



**STEP TWO**  
**5 MINUTES**

# TALKING ABOUT OATHS

## **PART THREE**

Introduce the idea of an *'oath'*, that it is like a very serious promise. Show them the image on the right.

You could also talk about Professor Snape making An Unbreakable Vow (picture in the Appendix) if Harry Potter references help.

[VIEW IMAGE HERE](#)



**STEP TWO**  
**5 MINUTES**

# TALKING ABOUT OATHS

## **PART FOUR**

Have you heard of any of these examples of oaths.

- Oath to join a gang.
- Oath of allegiance.
- Oath of citizenship.
- Oath of office.
- Hippocratic Oath.

## **PART FIVE—DRAMA**

Try putting your hands up like the people in the photo.

- What does it feel like to do that?
- Does it matter where you hold your hand, how loosely or firmly?

(There's no right answer here just maybe a sense of the formality of the gesture. Why have people chosen to do it this way and not another way?)

# MAKING THEIR OWN SCENES

## **PART ONE**

Think of a scenario where someone might be making an oath. What would it look like? These can be completely made up, no need to reproduce actual scenarios. But five suggestions from your previous discussions could be:

- About to give evidence in a courtroom
- Joining a gang who require an oath of secrecy
- Becoming the president of a country
- Joining the army, navy or air force of a country (or the space force in the future)
- Taking an oath of citizenship.

## **PART TWO—DRAMA**

Don't tell us, show us using Freeze Frames.

Freeze Frames are when you make a physical reproduction of a moment, as if someone were taking a photo of it.

In groups of 4/5 make a snapshot of the moment that the oath is being made. So if only one of them is making the oath the others will have to choose other people who could be in the scene. E.g. The judge, court clerk, lawyers/other gang members/the president's family etc.

Encourage the students to use all of their body even though the image is frozen.

Remind them to have a sense of what you would be feeling at that moment.

Once they have an image encourage them to remember exactly where they were, especially in relation to each other.



# MAKING THEIR OWN SCENES

## **PART THREE**

Now look at each freeze frame in turn, drawing out what they show about the class's ideas about oaths. When you look at each one ask:

- Can you guess what's going on?
- If every picture tells a story, what's the story of this freeze frame?
- What does it look like is going on?
- Is there a feel to the scene (formality/informality, possible sense of ceremony, seriousness)
- How many witnesses do they have?
- How many other people do you need to make it effective?
- Is there a particular person or persons in charge?

## **FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

See if they've got the idea of institutional authority, that it implies a wider social/political context.

- What makes it different from a vow?

## **PART FOUR**

Now you can make it come alive.

You can say up to 10 words after "*I swear...*"

Have a quick look at each one.

- What do you need to make it sound like a proper oath? (maybe sincerity).

## **PART FIVE—REFLECTION**

Tells us about this world you've made up.

- Why does the oath make sense in this world?

Tease out ideas around formality or ritual giving actions weight, also you may explore the emotional elements behind loyalty to an idea, place or person.

# INTRODUCING CONFLICT

## **PART ONE—DISCUSSION**

- Why would someone refuse to say the oath? (e.g. disagreement or discomfort with it)
- When would we not accept someone saying the oath? e.g. If we think they didn't mean it or we suspected they were doing it for other reasons

## **PART TWO—DRAMA**

Introducing conflict in their scenario.

- What more story do we need to add so there's disagreement in the worlds that you've created?
- In your groups explore ideas like disagreement with what the oath says, with what that means and with taking the oath.

Encourage them to create characters here who have reasons to disagree with the oath.

- A would-be president who doubts their own ability.
- A rival gang member who doesn't want a new member to join.
- Someone who's been made to enlist in the army by their family.
- Someone who's being asked to swear an oath of citizenship to a country whose government they disagree with.
- A witness who is really part of the crime.

## **PART THREE**

Now create another freeze frame where we see the conflict about to happen.

Emphasise that the conflict doesn't have to be physical but drama comes from conflicting emotions, so what the characters are thinking and feeling is important, and that will effect their stance, gestures and faces.

## **PART FOUR —THOUGHT-TRACKING**

Put your hand on the shoulder of some or all of the characters and have them say what is going through their mind.

Encourage them to say it as if they were the character, *'I wish I didn't have to do this'*, as opposed to, *'He doesn't want to do this'* and say it with the emotion appropriate to the thought.

## **PART FIVE**

Now let the scene run for a few seconds to see what might happen next.

This will involve the groups improvising for a bit. They shouldn't need much prompting as the disagreements they've created and the reminder of that (with thought-tracking) means the characters will have conflicting desires which generates drama.

# **DEVELOPING THE DRAMA**

## **POLARISING ARGUMENTS**

### **PART ONE—DISCUSSION**

- Is there a way that some of the people in the story we've made so far could be part of a family?

### **PART TWO—DRAMA**

- Decide how your characters are related in a family way.
- Now stand in the old position of your freeze frame.
- How does this change what you are thinking and feeling?

### **DISCUSSION**

- How does this make it different from if they didn't know each other so well?

### **PART THREE—DRAMA**

Now make a freeze frame of a scene when the family are in their home after the conflict has happened.

- How would they talk about it in the home?
- Do people hold their viewpoints very strongly?
- Does that make it harder to resolve the conflict?

## STEP SIX

# FINAL REFLECTIONS

### **PART ONE—DISCUSSION**

- What's it like making freeze frames of something instead of just talking about them?
- Do you have more of an idea about why people's make oaths?
- Did introducing family connections make a difference to your stories?

### **PART TWO—DRAMA**

Make a final freeze frame of all the characters in a year's time.

- Is the conflict resolved or are the characters still fighting?

# APPENDIX



## CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES

'I (*name*) having applied to the Minister for Justice for a certificate of naturalisation, hereby solemnly declare my fidelity to the Irish nation and my loyalty to the State. I undertake to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.'

At the ceremony candidates will take an oath of fidelity to the nation, receive their certificate of naturalisation and thereby become Irish citizens.

## THE UNBREAKABLE VOW IN HARRY POTTER

In Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Severus Snape makes an Unbreakable Vow to Narcissa Malfoy.

Almost all of the preparation of the Vow is mental, and it requires a third party, the Bonder, who actually casts the spell, and whose wand is used to actually provide the magical power to reinforce the Vow.

[VIEW IMAGE HERE](#)

## EXTRA STEP – INTRODUCING ALLEGORY AND METAPHOR

Remember the Harry Potter Unbreakable Vow. What are the Harry Potter books about, in general?

If your tableaux were a story about a real family quarrel you might not want to make it public. How can we tell stories about things whose details we might want to keep private or which feel a bit complicated?

Have you heard the story about the farm where the pigs take over because the farmer is so mean to all the animals. But then after a while the pigs start to walk on two legs and take all the best food and make the other animals work for them. They become like the farmer.

It's from a book called Animal Farm written by George Orwell about 80 years ago and was his way of telling a story about the Russian Revolution, something that had really happened 25 years before and which he thought had eventually made things worse.

What do we call it when we make up one story which is really about something else? Or you could say it's telling a new story based on the same shapes or events of the old one.

Can you think of an allegory for some of the stories you invented? Or could your stories be an allegory for something else?