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**Tips for using Drama in Online Teaching**

Since we can no longer travel and play our shows, I am going through my workshop notes to find drama activities that I think can work for teaching English online. I am trying to focus on activities which will stiil get students to be creative and/or feel a need to express themselves.

**Activity 6 – Teacher (or student) in role**

[This activity is a central to much drama work done with students and it will run through much of our online program. The 2-minute challenge Fantasy Interview is an example of it and most of our Interesting Meetings will feature an actor in role pretending to be a famous personality (Agatha Christie, William Shakespeare, et al). I will present it here in a simpler form to show some of the ways Teacher-in Role and Hotseating can be used in classroom situations.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLcy6Rhjzf0&feature=youtu.be)

The basic idea is that somebody pretends to be somebody else and has to talk or answer questions as that person. In the video to the Fantasy Interview challenge you can see somebody answering questions as Ludvig van Beethoven. But the character could be anybody.

If I am setting this up I will usually introduce the character ahead to the students, saying something like ..... In two minutes I will bring a special guest here to talk to you. S/he is a football player (astronaut, Charles Dickens, TED speaker, whatever the topic for the session is going to be) and she is going to answer your questions. So work together and think of questions that you can ask..... Then, after a while you return and present yourself as the character ..... Hello, I am Charles Dickens and I understand that you have some questions for me..... The students have prepared questions ahead and usually accept the fun of the situation and join in.

If the teacher takes the role like this, it can be a very good activity indeed for naturally revising or introducing material. If you are about to look at a passage on e.g. The environment and that passage features somebody from an organisation, you can be that person and pre-teach the ideas and vocabulary that will come up in the passage. Your students will ask simple questions, but you can easily expand your answers and control the content. For example (with Charles Dickens) if your student asks the question Where do you live? the answer can be ....I used to live in London with my family, but when I was eleven my father was sent to prison for debt, he did not have enough money, so I had to live alone and work in a factory.... The answer to a question is longer than necessary

There are many different ways to use it. Students can choose a famous character that they like, or they can be given the task to learn about a character and have to answer questions on that character in order to test their knowledge. Here are a few tips to make the activity ork well ….

* Have students prepare the questions ahead so that you can call on them to give you a question rather than waiting for the bolder ones to think of something on the spot.
* Have fun with and enjoy the improvisation aspect of it. Do not be afraid to make up answers if you do not know (you can put them straight on facts later). They will probably try to catch you out with questions like what is your favourite colour? or What did you have for breakfast? Making up answers is part of the fun.
* If you can, make a small change to your appearance, (or even a large one) to play the character. Students will probably appreciate the change and that you are not taking yourself too seriously.
* If the students themselves are in role, try to have small groups of 2-4 students answering questions in teh same role. This takes the pressure off individual students to have to answer on the spot and risk looking foolish.