

Devising an historical drama about your local area

Rules for your play:

- Each student within each group must have a minimum of 3 lines that they deliver during the performance.
- At least 3 of the questions that the group have answered on their particular area need to be conveyed within their play. [That is 3 questions to be addressed per group, not per student.]

NB Regarding the group focusing on Stapleton Workhouse, we want a play about the purpose built workhouse and the converted prison, not about when it later became the Stapleton Institution for the Maintenance and Workshop Training of Certified Mental Defectives. This extra information can be given in the theatre programme, but we feel that this subject matter is not appropriate to be addressed in this manner in the limited time available.

NB Regarding the group focusing on quarries and Pound Lane, they can focus on either quarries or on Pound Lane. They don't need to try and combine the two into a single play.

- Each play should be between 3 to 5 minutes long.

Considerations for your play, based on the heritage walk, Pete's Know Your Place session and/ or Ruth's play preparation session:

1. What aspect of your group's particular area do you think is the most interesting?

Is it the conditions of the workhouse or how the French prisoners were all released? Is it about how unfairly people were treated there?

Is it about what life might have been like for the orphans at the children's homes? Is it something that you maybe had no idea about before, such as the pound being for stray farm animals that could only be recovered by paying a fee? Is it about how the quarries contributed to the name of the area? Is it about Hannah More's campaign for education for everyone, not just the rich or her fight to end slavery?

These are just ideas and it may be that your group have a different idea about what you feel is the most interesting aspect and what would make for the best focus for your play.

2. What characters do you want to feature in your play to help convey information about your local heritage?

For example, at Hannah More's house, will you have people opposed to Hannah More's ideas so that she can argue with them and present her case? Will you have children in the school room or the teacher talking about the students? Would Hannah More be portrayed as kind, strict, fair? In the children's homes, would you have children of a variety of ages?

3. Which points are you going to convey?

For example, are you going to concentrate on just the pound or just the quarries or are you going to find a way of combining the two and conveying information about both subjects in your play? With the French Prison are you going to focus on the first few points and the early days of the prison or the last points and focus on the lead up to the release of the prisoners after the Treaty of Paris?

4. Where will your play be set?

For example, regarding the children's homes are you going to set it in the home for girls or the home for boys or the master's home? Will you have the children attending one of the local Methodist churches?

5. How will you set the scene so the audience clearly understands where and when it is?

For example, for the workhouse, are you going to set it in the old prison, just after the prison has been converted into a workhouse and have characters comment on how few changes have been made, perhaps claiming that the workhouse is a prison?

Consider these questions and then, in your groups, write your opening scene focusing on how to convey scene and character. Teacher to allow about 10 minutes for this activity and to visit groups in the meantime to check on progress. Groups to also consider where the audience will be and which characters they want the audience to focus on at any one time.

Option 1: Groups to perform their opening scenes in front of the class. Class to provide structured response and consider the following questions:

- Could all members of the group be seen by the audience?
- Was the audience's attention clearly focused (so there's not too much going on at the same time)?
- What information has been conveyed so far?

Class can also comment on what went well or what they liked about the performance. We are not interested at this stage about suggestions for improvement.

Option 2: Groups to continue to develop their plays whilst the teacher visits a group at a time and watches and comments on their plays so far. The teacher would be the only audience at this stage.

Groups can script their plays and they can also give some thought to appropriate costume and how they can source costume and props. There will be time on Tuesday for classes to develop and rehearse their plays.