



pamelabowell
drama for creative learning

The Voice of Solomon Green

- a drama of yearning

Upper KS2

This drama scheme uses Shaun Tan's book 'The Arrival' as a starting point. It is a book without words. Working from selected images, the drama is designed to explore the life and experiences of the central character and so enable the students to generate text that the images might illustrate. I have suggested possible writing opportunities but there are many other activities that could be stimulated by the drama. Remember that it is impossible to include what the children will contribute to the drama so you will need to be flexible and ready to take what they offer. The drama is theirs more than yours.

Strategies: the different ways of working in drama that are used in the unit of work

- ◆ Improvisation
- ◆ Teacher in role
- ◆ Still image
- ◆ Mime
- ◆ Writing/drawing in role
- ◆ Role on the Wall
- ◆ Conscience Alley
- ◆ Collective Role
- ◆ Thought tracking
- ◆ Small group playmaking

Resources: items used to support the drama as it unfolds

- ◆ Session 1: Letter
- ◆ All Sessions: Images from the book
- ◆ All Sessions: Large sheet of paper with three columns headed – what we know, what we think we know, what we would like to know.
- ◆ All Sessions: Life-size body outline for creating Role on the Wall
- ◆ Session 1: Flyer advertising the meeting
- ◆ Session 2: An origami bird
- ◆ Session 3: Clipboard and pencil
- ◆ Session 3: Postit notes and pencils for everyone
- ◆ Session 4: Storm music
- ◆ Session 6: Music - *Esta montana d'enfrente (This Mountain in Front)* Running time: 3:33
(Accentus Ensemble Sephardic Romances: Traditional Jewish Music from Spain)

Session 1

- ◆ Explain to the children that in our drama we are going to explore someone's life.
- ◆ Ask the children to sit in a circle and make sure there is a place for you, as well. Have the sheet with the three columns on the floor near you.
- ◆ Begin by reading the children the letter. You could also give them a copy. If you give them one between two it will encourage discussion. Ask them to discuss with their partner what they think it means and what they know, think they know and would like to know.
- ◆ Explain that one of the vital things in drama is that we all agree because we have to make it all together. So, we are going to share our ideas and those that we agree on we will record.
- ◆ Using the three-column sheet, ask them to share their ideas (what they know, think they know and would like to know) as a result of the letter. You could do this column-by-column so that children don't have to wait too long to share. You could scribe these or you could ask the child who made the suggestion to write it down in the appropriate column.
- ◆ In the second column, the children will probably have agreed on how they think Solomon Green might be feeling. If not, you could prompt them to think about this.
- ◆ Ask them to stand and at your signal (clap of your hands, click of fingers or whatever) to make a still image of Solomon that shows how he was feeling when he wrote the letter. At your next signal ask them to make the image again but this time say out loud one word that goes with it. This will produce a 'snapshot' of Solomon at this point
- ◆ Introduce the body outline. Explain that we are going to build up our picture of Solomon using role on the wall. Give each child a sticky note and get them to write their feeling word and then one-by-one ask them to apply it to the body outline.
- ◆ Next ask them to come back to the circle and introduce the first image. Explain that this is the first image that Solomon left. Ask them, again in pairs, to work out what is happening in the image. We need to see if we confirm, alter or answer what we put in the three columns.
- ◆ Share conclusions again and building the consensus add to the three columns.
- ◆ The core of the first image is of packing belongings before leaving. "If we think we know that Solomon packed a suitcase. Let's try and find out why."

- ◆ Brainstorm ideas about why people might pack belongings and leave.

Writing opportunity: the children might write a paired list and combine these as an agreed class list

- ◆ Ask the children to imagine that they were people living in the same town as Solomon. Ask them to think of a moment that they were content with their lives – work, with their families etc.
- ◆ Ask them to find a space and at your signal to make a still image of themselves at that moment – as if a photograph had been taken. You could comment on a number. “Here’s someone reading a book” etc
- ◆ Now ask them to imagine a moment when they were no longer content with their lives in the town and at your signal to make a still image of that moment. Ask them to think about how their bodies and facial expressions would reflect their feeling.
- ◆ Explain, “This time when you hear my signal, talk to the person next to you and tell them why you are feeling fed up with life here. It could be for one of the reasons we thought of earlier or another one.”
- ◆ Once they are engaged in conversation, move around the group in role as a local person who has some news. You will need a copy of the flyer advertising a public meeting. Encourage them to go to the meeting that evening.
- ◆ Stop the drama for a moment using your signal, and explain that when the drama starts again, you will all be in the town hall and you will be the person who has called the meeting.

“Good evening everyone, I’m glad to see so many of you here tonight. I can tell that you know a good thing when you see it. There are work opportunities overseas. Businesses are crying out for good workers. I can assure you that you will be welcomed. We all know that times are hard, here. But time is short. I don’t know when I might be able to send another ship. That is why I am offering you the chance to take passage on my ship The Arrival. But, we must sail the day after tomorrow. If you want to take your chance, I’m going to be signing people up at the quayside - first come, first served. Are there any questions?”

There will almost certainly be questions and you are going to have to think on your feet to respond to them. I have deliberately not created a specific location but you could if you wanted to. It just holds greater possibilities if you keep it loose.

- ◆ ‘Well, I have another meeting to attend. I will look forward to seeing you at the ship.’

Use your signal to stop the drama.

- ◆ Ask the children if they could agree that Solomon had been at that meeting.

- ◆ Ask them to form two rows facing each other a couple of metres apart. Tell them that you are going to be Solomon walking home along the street after the meeting. He is thinking about what he has heard and is making a decision. As you walk down the street (between the rows) ask the children to speak out loud what is going on inside Solomon's head. We will need to find out what circumstances are driving him to take the ship.
- ◆ Tell the children that this is where the drama must end for today. Next time we will see what happens when Solomon gets home.

Writing opportunity: Solomon's thoughts going home could be written up and added to the role on the wall.

Writing opportunity: revisit the three-column sheet and adjust further in the light of what has been revealed in the drama

Writing opportunity: the children might write Solomon's diary

Session 2

- ◆ Out of role, recap. Use the role on the wall and the three-column sheet to help. You could also draw on some of the entries the children have made in Solomon's diary.
- ◆ Remind the children that we still need to find out what happened when Solomon got home after the meeting. Ask the children if we have any evidence of who might have been at home. (photograph of family). Ask if we think we know why Solomon was interested in hearing about work available overseas.
- ◆ In pairs, ask the children to take on the roles of Solomon and his wife, let's call her Ruth, and to create a 2-minute scene that would confirm what we think. Give the children a few minutes to devise and rehearse it.
- ◆ Explain to the children that we are going to run the scenes simultaneously but at your signal (which needs to be loud enough to be heard over the talk) you will eavesdrop on some of them. Everyone else will be still as you select one group to carry on. You need only hear a brief snatch of conversation then set everyone off again, and repeat the process several times so we build an overall impression of what was said that evening.
- ◆ After this, ask everyone to form a circle, facing outwards, at your signal, they children should turn to face inwards and simultaneously say a word that sums up how they think Solomon is feeling now.
- ◆ Turn out again and do the same for Ruth.

Writing opportunity: these could be recorded and added to the role on the wall.

- ◆ Gather the children together, sitting in a circle, tell them it is time to look at Solomon's second image. It's the following day and the case is being packed. In pairs ask the children to note anything new that we now know or think we know as a result of seeing this image.

- ◆ Ask two of the children if they would volunteer to try to recreate this image as a statue. If you think that no one would be confident enough to do this, then as an alternative, you could use two items of clothing. It would be much better if two children did it, however. Explain that the rest of the class are going to become the voices of Solomon and Ruth.
- ◆ Have the rest of the class in a semi-circle facing the statue. Ask the first ‘voice’ to move forward and stand behind the shoulder of the character they are going to speak for. Ask them to touch the character’s shoulder and say aloud a sentence that their chosen character is speaking. The next one in the line touches the shoulder of the other character and speaks the response. The third voice touches the shoulder of the first voice and responds to the second voice. The fourth voice touches the shoulder of the second voice and responds and so on until all the remaining voices have been included. It should now be possible to run the conversation again with each voice speaking their line with feeling. This should make a powerful moment of drama.

Writing opportunity: the children might make a record of this conversation. At any point new information could be added to the role on the wall and the three-column sheet.

- ◆ Gather the children together. Tell them that you are thinking of the other person that appeared in the Solomon’s family photograph – his daughter – let’s call her Naomi. Make sure you have your origami bird to hand. If you are very clever and have practised it a lot so you are confident, you could make the bird in front of their very eyes!
- ◆ This is the parting gift that Solomon made for Naomi. Discuss with the children how Solomon might feel leaving his daughter behind. If you are able to make the bird, gather the children around you to form the walls of the room. Ask them to remind Solomon of memories of his daughter – things like a birthday party, her first day at school etc. This could be ritualised so that each child begins with “Solomon, do you remember the day Naomi
- ◆ Divide the group into two – one half will be a collective Solomon and the other half a collective Naomi. The Solomon half will have the bird. They will say what Solomon says to Naomi as he gives her the bird. The Naomi half will receive the bird and say what she says to her father.
- ◆ It is now almost time for Solomon to leave. In his last quiet moment he writes a note to Ruth to find and read after he has gone. The children become Solomon’s inner voice as he writes

Writing opportunity: the children might write the note from Solomon to Ruth.

- ◆ Explain that this is where we must end for today. You could ask the children to think about what more they would like to know or you could simply tell them that in the next session we will explore Solomon’s departure and sea voyage.

Writing opportunity: additions to the two running records could be made.

Writing opportunity: a further entry could be made in Solomon’s diary

Writing opportunity: using today's image, the children could write the second page of the storybook drawing on what they have generated in the drama.

Session 3

- ◆ Out of role, remind the children of where they stopped the drama last time. Explain that we are going to pick up the story of Solomon at the quayside where he hopes to sign up and be allowed on the ship.
- ◆ Make sure you have your clipboard and pencil with you. Remind the children of the public meeting and the roles they took. Tell them that when the drama begins they will be the people from that meeting who have decided to try to sign up for the voyage.

It would be good if you could have something to stand on to raise you up a little but you could manage without it.

- ◆ Using narration, the children mime:
“There were many people who dearly wanted a place on the ship. They set off early, coming from far and wide, anxious not to be too late. They gathered on the quayside patiently waiting for the ship's owner to appear to sign them up. Solomon Green was amongst them.

Once the children have gathered around where you are going to stand, immediately adopt your role (the one you had in the meeting) and call for attention. You need to take the names of the travellers – write them on your clipboard – and be rather brusque, not standing any nonsense.

“Give me your names and I'll take as many of you as I can. (Of course you will take everyone in the class) Right, that's all. Now, I want you to listen very carefully. When you come back tomorrow and come on board, I want to make very clear to you that you will not be allowed to bring a great deal of luggage with you. I know that many of you are expecting to start new lives but that doesn't mean you can bring everything you own with you. Space is limited and so I refuse to carry furniture and large items. This is going to be a long voyage over the ocean. We can't put ourselves and the ship at risk. So, when you go home and do your final packing tonight just bring essential, practical items. If you must bring something sentimental then make sure it's something small – a book or the brooch your mother gave you – not the chest of drawers! Do you all understand? Good! Then you need to be here tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock sharp.”

- ◆ We know what Solomon took with him –the family photograph. Ask the townsfolk to think of the keepsake that they will take with them. Give them a Postit note and ask them to draw it. Share with their neighbour telling what it is and why it is important to them. These can be added to the display.
- ◆ Ask the children to find a space and very carefully and quietly mime the packing of the final bag in which they are putting the keepsake just before leaving for the quayside. Tell them that when they hear your signal you would like them to freeze. Explain that you are going to touch them on the shoulder, one-by-one. When you do so they need to speak out loud in a big voice what they are thinking

as they are about to go to the ship. Tell them that when they have spoken they should pick up their bag and go to the quayside to wait for everyone to join them.

- ◆ When all the children have voiced their thoughts and are standing at the quayside, join them in role as a newspaper reporter. The departure of the boat is an important news story. Ask what they are hoping for etc. Tell them that you would like to take a photograph of the moment they board. The Editor is holding the front page for you. Use a digital camera to photograph either individual passengers or groups.

Writing opportunity: The photographs could be captioned. The newspaper report could be written.

- ◆ This is the moment that the travellers board the ship. As they begin, use your signal to freeze the action.
- ◆ Ask the children to join you and sit in a circle. We need to give our attention to those who have been left behind. Share the image of Ruth and Naomi. Ask the children to talk to the person next to them and think about two things. On the way home, what did they say to each other and what were they thinking to themselves.
- ◆ Ask the children to make two facing lines to become the walls of the buildings lining the street. Tell them that you will represent Ruth and Naomi. The first time you walk along the street, ask the children to say what the mother and child were saying to each other. Then pass through again and this time ask them to say what each was thinking to themselves.
- ◆ And this is where we must stop for today. Next time we will find out what happens to Solomon on his voyage and his arrival.

Writing opportunity: continue Solomon's diary

Writing opportunity: using today's image and what has been generated by the drama, write the next page of the storybook.

Session 4

- ◆ In this session you could create a storm at sea or you could explore some of the events of the journey. On balance, I think that creating the storm would provide a different experience for the children. It can be made in exactly the same manner as with the Yr 1 scheme. It just that the results will be more sophisticated. So:
- ◆ Begin with reminding the children that the ship is now at sea. The passengers have found themselves having to share cabins. Ask them to get into groups of about 4. These are the people with whom they are sharing.
- ◆ Share the image of the ship at sea with the storm clouds and explain that The Arrival had to endure the storm.
- ◆ Begin by asking the groups to decide where they were and what they were doing at the height of the storm. They will need to decide what was the most important moment.

- ◆ Get them to make a group still image and add sentence of dialogue for each person. “Look out the water’s coming over” etc etc.
- ◆ After practising all together, share each group’s work one by one.
- ◆ Next, ask them to make another still image of just a moment before the one they have and another a moment after – again with a line of dialogue each – so that they can put them together as a series of three – just before the moment, the moment, just after the moment.
- ◆ Again you can practise these all together and share them individually.
- ◆ Finally, tell the children to imagine that what they have is like a video of the storm and that it’s like they have been using the freeze frame button. Now what we are going to do is play the tape in slow motion so that instead of having the three images with stops in between we are now going to see continuous action. This means they will need to work out how to connect the three together. This will certainly require movement and could we require additional dialogue.
- ◆ Again you can practise these simultaneously and then as the culmination of the session we can put the storm together in the following way.
- ◆ Make sure that the groups are in a large circle so that they can all see each other.
- ◆ Number the groups so that they know who follows whom. It is best to let it flow naturally round the circle rather than dodging here, there and everywhere.
- ◆ Tell them that they must be ready to start their piece as soon as the group before them finishes. As soon as they are finished they should sit down. What we want to achieve is a continuous effect.
- ◆ In order to produce maximum effect, when the first group begins you could play suitably stormy music and, in addition, get the children to produce sound effects of the rain and the wind vocally, as well.
- ◆ Once the storm has died down, gather the passengers around you, you in role as Captain, have your clipboard with you, make a roll call - remember to end with Solomon Green. Freeze the action.
- ◆ Out of role, “Thank goodness, they all survived.

Writing opportunities: diary entries, the Captain’s Log, storm poetry, using today’s image to write the next part of the storybook.

Session 5

- ◆ With the children sitting in a circle, out of role, recap the last session. Use some of the diary entries or latest part of the storybooks. Explain that we are going to explore what happened to Solomon on his arrival.

- ◆ In pairs, look at the arrival image. Pay close attention to the body language and expressions. Ask the children to decide what they think is going on and how the passengers might be feeling.
- ◆ Call everyone's attention to you and build a consensus again, adding the agreed statements to the role on the wall.
- ◆ Remind them of their passenger role. Tell the children that we are going to try to recreate the large, dockside image.
- ◆ One at a time, ask the passengers to bring their luggage and walk from the ship to the shore and join the line.
- ◆ Once all are assembled, ask them to close their eyes and imagine what the passengers could see as they waited in the queue – people, objects, buildings etc. Explain that we are going to share those visions. Each person will begin with “In this new country, I can see” This needs to be said individually but in a continuous stream. You could manage this by beginning with the last person in the line who touches the shoulder of the person in front of them and so on. As soon as you are touched, speak. Make sure every child knows who they are going to touch before you begin.

You could make this more elaborate by beginning, “In the old country I remember, In this new country I see”

Writing opportunities: descriptive accounts of the setting could be written

- ◆ Ask the children what processes they think the passengers would have to go through next – immigration, passport control etc. What problems might they encounter – language, hostility, confusion.
- ◆ Ask the children to divide into small groups of about 4. They could be the same ones as they were in to make the storm or different ones.
- ◆ Ask the children to create a small play, lasting no more than 3 minutes, that shows what happened next. Remind them that they are likely to be introducing new characters – people from the new country. Ask them to think imaginatively about how they are going to show some of the problems – language for example.
- ◆ Give them time to polish these scenes so they do their ideas justice.
- ◆ Share the performances. It does not matter if groups show different attitudes and responses to the situation. This only reflects what actually happens in situations such as these.
- ◆ After the last one, you could draw them all together by summarising what happened. “So, some of the passengers were greeted warmly by” “Others” You'll just need to reiterate what the children created.
- ◆ This is where the drama will end for this session. We'll have to wait until next time to find out what happened to Solomon in the new country.

Writing opportunity: the children could recreate their performances as playscripts

Writing opportunity: diary entries

Writing opportunity: give the children the images of Solomon being processed through immigration and ask them to write the next part of the storybook.

Session 6

- ◆ Remind the children that Solomon is now in the new country. You could share some of the experiences of last time.
- ◆ With the children in a circle, share the next set of images, in pairs. The images represent Solomon's first walk through the city.
- ◆ Ask them to suggest how the city feels about a stranger walking through its streets and what it might say to him.
- ◆ Create the city streets by forming two lines a couple of metres apart – tell the children that you will represent Solomon walking amongst them. As he walks let us hear what the streets are saying to the stranger in their midst.
- ◆ When that is complete and we have judged the mood of the city, walk through the street again and this time let us hear what Solomon is thinking about the city.
- ◆ Tell the children that they are all going to take on the role of Solomon as at last, he reaches his lodgings. Ask them to mime his actions. Tell them that when you get to the part where Solomon is in the room you will touch them on the shoulder and ask them to name an item in the room that Solomon sees. Then, you narrate:

“Weary from the exertions of the day and all the new experiences, Solomon slowly turns the key in the lock. It is stiff and takes some effort. At last he hears the lock click and he places his hand upon the door handle. With anticipation he presses it down and opens the door. He enters the room and closes the door slowly behind him. Wide eyed, he looks around his new home and sees”
(you need to move quite quickly from child to child to keep the momentum going.
“At last Solomon's eyes rested on a small bed in the corner of the room. He lifted his suitcase onto the bed, unbuckled the strap and opened the lock. With both hands he raised the lid and looked inside.” Freeze.

Gather the children to you and share the image of Solomon opening the case. Ask them to discuss in pairs what they think he is seeing in his case.- memories of home.

- ◆ Still out of role, Divide the children into groups of 4 – 6 and explain to the children that we are going to try to recreate what Solomon, with his memories fresh in his mind, dreamt about when he went to bed that night. Explain that the challenge is to create them in movement only because we are going to use a piece of music to provide the soundtrack to the dreams.
- ◆ Play the music so they can hear it; judge its mood and feeling.

- ◆ You will need to give them enough time to really do this well. It should be a very powerful moment.
- ◆ You may have to play the music several times during the devising process in order to support them. Have a final rehearsal when everyone performs together.
- ◆ Then share the pieces individually.

Writing opportunity: using today's images write the next part of the story.

- ◆ Explain that this is where Solomon's pictures stop and invite them to speculate on how his story ends.

Writing opportunity: Create their own endings for the story to complete the book.

Writing opportunity: Create a playscript from their endings to show what happened to Solomon and his family in the end.