

# SHARE

Verbatim & Collage Drama  
2020 Online Resource

## NON-LINEAR FORMS

Non-linear dramatic structures do not focus on the chronological progression of time. Often, they include features such as flashbacks, flash forwards, episodes, multiple perspectives of an event, multiple narratives, or an out of order narrative.

### **Forming: Non-Linear Narrative Task**

1. Recall an event that has happened to you recently.
2. Retell the narrative from your perspective, using a linear structure (beginning, middle, end).
3. To contrast, rewrite the story as either a flashback or multiple perspective narrative (use the examples below to help structure your work).
4. Film or storyboard the non-linear version of you telling the story. Use flashback and forward or multiple role to do so.

#### Linear Narrative:

- Sarah lost her dog.
- The neighbour found it but doesn't want to give it back.
- Sarah's mum demands the return of the dog and all is well.

#### Flashback Narrative:

- Sarah and her dog are at home, happy.
- Sarah says, 'Never do that again.'
- Flashback to: the dog running away.
- Cut back to the present. Sarah's neighbour walks past. She shoots them an angry glare.
- Flashback to: the neighbour finding the dog but not wanting to give it back.
- Cut back to the present. Sarah says, 'We'll be keeping a closer eye on him too.'

#### Multiple Perspectives Narrative:

- Sarah has lost her dog and goes looking for it.
- Mum notices Sarah is missing from the house and goes looking for Sarah.
- The neighbour finds a dog.
- Sarah is searching the streets.
- The neighbour realises it's Sarah's and decides to hide it because he thinks she is not a good pet owner.
- Mum calls Sarah, asking where she is.
- The neighbour can see Sarah on the street crying on her phone.

## VERBATIM THEATRE

Verbatim theatre is a form of documented theatre in which plays are constructed from the precise words spoken by people interviewed about a particular event or topic.

### **Forming: Verbatim Interview Task**

This task will require students to partner up. They can conduct this over video chat, message chat, or by pre-writing the questions below and emailing back and forth.

1. Partner up with another student.
2. Decide who is A & B
3. A is to tell B a story about the best holiday they've ever been on.
4. B is to remember as much detail as possible about A's story.
5. Swap and share your other story.
6. Now, individually, re-write your partner's story in third person (ie. James went to...).
7. Include every detail you remember. Consider details such as who else was there, how they felt, what they could see/hear/smell etc.
8. Once completed, tell the story to your partner in your own words in third person.
9. Afterwards, answer the following three questions:
  - a. What it was like hearing someone else tell your story in their words?
  - b. What did it feel like to retell someone else's story. Did you feel a sense of ownership or did you feel uncomfortable? How easy was it to remember each detail?
  - c. Did your storyteller get any details wrong or forget anything?

### Extension Tasks:

- Re-write the story using a non-linear structure.
- Consider how you could stage this story in a theatrical setting. What technical elements, staging and conventions could you use to turn this into an engaging scene on stage?

## THE ETHICS OF MAKING VERBATIM THEATRE

When telling a real story that involves real people, events and places, it's very important to make sure that you are doing so in an ethical manner

This includes:

- Respecting the truth. This means not changing the story to make it 'more exciting' or 'more interesting.'
- Respecting boundaries. There may be some things that people feel uncomfortable talking about.
- Respecting others. You may encounter people from cultures, backgrounds and perspectives that are different to yours. It is important that you are mindful of this and reserve judgement.
- Respecting emotions. Do not probe or invade someone's privacy inappropriately. If someone says 'I won't answer that,' or 'I'd rather not talk about that,' you may need to walk away.
- Respecting authenticity. This includes considering whether you are the right person to be telling a story or playing a character. For example if someone is a different ethnicity to you, it may not be appropriate to play them as a character.

Below are some quotes that might guide you or make you consider the ethical approach to verbatim storytelling.

### **Father Roger Schmidt** on *The Laramie Project*

"And I will speak with you, I trust that if you write a play of this, that you say it right. You need to do your best to say it correct."

### **Julie Salverson** in *Saying it Right: Creating Ethical Verbatim*

"Working verbatim is not an easy task. It is challenging not least because there are palpable tensions between the ethical challenges of dealing with people's stories and the aesthetic challenges of creating interesting theatre from them. How do theatre workers negotiate the multiple responsibilities of integrity, imagination, inspiration and craft?"

### **Janet Gibson** in *Saying it Right: Creating Ethical Verbatim*

"In the re-telling of people's lives, in the use of their experiences, understandings and words can lay tremendous political potential for change. But along with this comes ethical responsibilities, some way of "saying it right" based on an ethics of responsibility and interdependence that is transacted in each particular situation but which also rests on the foundational acceptance of theatre as a collaborative practice."

Source: [https://www.academia.edu/2027988/Saying\\_It\\_Right\\_Creating\\_Ethical\\_Verbatim\\_Theatre](https://www.academia.edu/2027988/Saying_It_Right_Creating_Ethical_Verbatim_Theatre)

## EXPLORING IDENTITY

### Task: Charades Battle

1. Pick three words that describe you.
2. Think of three actions/gestures that communicate those words.
3. Record or Perform the three gestures.
4. Your class must guess what your three words are (respond over live video chat or email if recorded).
5. Whoever's performance gets the most correct guesses from the class wins!

### Task: Stereotype Juxtaposition

1. Select a clique group that you would stereotypically see in school (Academic, Sporty, Theatre Kid etc).
2. Create a table (see example below) reflecting on the stereotype versus the reality.

<b>Academic</b>	
Nerd	Focused on their studies, but might like other things too.
Lame	Maybe I just don't know them very well.
No social life	They probably have a different friend group to mine.

3. Using your brainstorm table, create a short script for two performers where Person A represents the stereotype, and Person B represents the reality. Use 'I am...' statements to structure your work.

For example:

A: I am a nerd

B: I am a hard worker.

A: I don't like sports.

B: I actually play footy too.

Focus on the juxtaposition of the statements, and what they are trying to convey politically/emotionally to your audience.

Extension Tasks:

- Consider how you could stage this story in a theatrical setting. What technical elements, staging and conventions could you use to turn this into an engaging scene on stage?
- Re-write the scene, but Person A is the real person and Person B is someone else commenting on them (ie. 'They're such a nerd, I bet they have no friends').

## COLLAGE DRAMA

Collage Drama is a collection of material, selected around a theme and shaped into a dramatic performance; the material may be selected from diverse sources such as plays, poetry, prose, songs, music, dance, newspapers, electronic media and improvisational workshops.

### **Forming Task: News as Stimulus**

1. Find a news article/story that excites you – think about, the people, the place, the events.
2. Pick a person (character) from that story.
3. Write a monologue/stream of consciousness from their perspective. It can be describing how they experienced the event itself, it can be how they felt at the time or how they feel now. Did the event change their lives, or not? Are they happy or sad or angry about what happened etc.
4. Break the monologue up into four sections. Each section will be a different scene in your collage drama.
5. Assign a different Collage Drama convention/technique to each scene. Including:
  - a. Poetry
  - b. Movement/Physical Theatre
  - c. Song/Music
  - d. Scene
  - e. Newspaper Excerpt
  - f. Facts/Stats/Research related to the chosen article
6. Apply each technique to each section, considering the different ways you can tell that character's story.

## Task: Responding to Poetry

1. Read the poem below. First read it from top to bottom, ignoring the spacing but following the punctuation
2. Second, read it from bottom to top, ignoring the punctuation, but following the spacing.
3. Compare and contrast the different meanings.

### Refuge by Jason Fotso.

Turn away the refugees.  
We will not

open up  
our homes and hearts  
for

children.  
Close our doors on  
the weak.  
Only

fear behind  
our  
love can put  
strength in our

hands.  
We cannot let them bleed into our

nation.  
They share the blood of our

enemy.  
Our own  
are endangered by  
the refugees.

We have forgotten  
the words that  
the Statue of Liberty shines.  
In this darkest hour,

terror  
stands stronger than  
our people  
of  
power.  
This

fear  
conquers  
the home of the brave.