

Activities: The actors and their roles

Specific learning outcomes

Students will:

- understand and explore the representative roles of Vladimir and Estragon
- explore the concept of status
- evaluate the performance of the actors in playing their roles.

These learning outcomes relate to the Communication and Interpreting in Drama (CI) and Understanding Drama in Context (UC) strands in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*.

Activity 6: Exploring the roles

The characters of Vladimir (Did) and Estragon (Gogo) have been created as representative figures of humanity. All we see is how they react to the situation in which they find themselves – waiting. We do not find out anything about their past, occupations, or relationships. Little happens in the play for the actors to work with, and the dialogue is sparse and illogical. This is a real challenge for an actor!

- Read a scene from the play. (A recommended scene starts from the 'His Highness' line (Script extract 4) on the first page.)
- Work on this scene in pairs. Pay careful attention to the directions in italics. Work on how you will play the lines by rehearsing them in the following ways:
 - without the dialogue
 - with the dialogue and no action
 - in gibberish
 - without using hands for gestures
 - sitting
 - moving constantly.
- Rehearse the scene for presentation, recording your decisions about how you will use voice, movement, gesture, facial expression, and space to convey ideas about the characters and situation.

Activity 7: Rituals and routines

Existentialist philosophy holds that we avoid the fear and anguish caused by our inevitable deaths by creating routines, timetables,

schedules, and rituals that make us feel safe and in control of the world.

- As a group, brainstorm examples from your own experience of routines and rituals that we create. These may be as simple as a set order for washing dishes, to how you prepare for an exam, or how you celebrate Christmas.
- Represent one of these routines by finding three essential movements that are part of the routine. Experiment until you are happy with the movements that you have chosen. Rehearse the movements so that they are big and strong.
- Choose three words to accompany your movement sequence. Put the words and movement together. You may use repetition. Structure the sequence however you like.
- Perform your sequence to a partner, and watch their sequence. Working together, find two moments at which you will make contact while performing your own routines. These may be moments of physical contact or moments of eye contact. Begin and finish the performance of your sequences with a freeze.
- Examine the play for the use of ritual or routine movement.

Activity 8: Exploring status

The characters of Pozzo and Lucky have a clear relationship in terms of status. Pozzo, as the master, is a high-status role, and Lucky, as the servant, is a low-status role.

Other roles that indicate status are, for example, boss, worker, leader follower, principal, teacher, student, parent, child, cool student, geek.

- Think of other examples of roles that have a certain status. Decide which roles are high status and which are low.
- Create tableaux of pairs of roles using levels and body positions to show the relative status.
- Play a scene involving two of these roles without dialogue. Indicate status by using vocal sounds, movements, gesture, and facial expression.

- Replay the scene with the same roles but with the relative status reversed.