

## FIVE DRAMA ACTIVITIES inspired by 'THE GARDEN OF INSIDE-OUTSIDE'

*Created for Book Island by Imogen Bond*

### 1. SUITCASE STORIES

**Aim: To step into the shoes of a child or young person forced to leave their home suddenly**

**Before the lesson**, put some items that could belong to a child in a bag or suitcase. Ideally one item for the class split into groups of approx. 4. Books, toys, clothes, comfort blankets, art supplies, sweets. Try to put in items that suggest the person comes from another country, or speak a language other than English.

**In the lesson**, place the suitcase in the middle of the room, and sit in a circle around it. Explain that this suitcase was found outside school, it hasn't been claimed, and we don't know who it belongs to. **Ask the children to become detectives**, and see what conclusions they can draw about the owner of the bag from the objects inside.

Open up the suitcase, and take out one object at a time for everyone to see. Take a few minutes to **investigate all the objects as a group**. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers, we are looking for clues as to the identity of the owner and need to keep an open mind! Some questions to ask about the objects:

*What is it? How well used or loved is it? What age might the owner of it be? What might they enjoy doing? What are their interests? Can you draw any conclusions about their family or what kind of person they are? Why do you think they packed these items? Where might they be from?*

**Now split into groups of 4. Each group can select one of the objects.** In the groups, they will split into pairs. Ask the groups to imagine themselves as the owner of this object.

**Each pair will create a mini play about the object that is just 5 lines long.** The lines don't need to alternate between the two actors – one actor can say all 5 lines (of course the other actor needs to be responding, even if they aren't speaking!). A line can be a full sentence, or just an 'oh', yep, 'wow in response. You need to think very carefully as you only have 5 lines, and no more!

**Pair A** will create a mini play where we see the owner of the object interacting or using the object as part of their everyday life. What can your 5 line play show us about how the owner feels about this object?

**Pair B** will create a mini play where the owner of the object will choose to pack it into their suitcase? Try to convey their reason for packing it – where are they going that means they wish to take this object?

The pairs rehearse their 5 line plays, and then **share them with the group**. For each object, play Pair As scene first, followed by Pair B.

**As everyone watches the plays, as them to think about what new information they notice about the potential owner of these objects.** The plays may suggest opposing ideas, which is fine – keep an open mind! They may start to identify with how the object owners feel about their possessions and why they wanted to take them to the new place, which is to be encouraged.

Once you have watched all the plays, **ask the whole group to consider what objects they would pack** if they were going somewhere they didn't know and they had to leave suddenly. Why would they choose those particular objects, what do they mean to them? Connect this to the characters in the book – do they choose to pack the same kind of things as the children in class?

**Extension task:** look at this film and article about what refugees pack when they need to leave their home. Discuss different objects – some have sentimental value, some are practical. What would you choose and why?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-36303279>

<https://www.carryology.com/bags/whats-in-my-bag-what-refugees-bring-when-they-run-for-their-lives/>

## 2. INSIDE - OUTSIDE

**Aim: to explore the different feelings and emotions created by the setting, and how it affects the protagonists**

**Split the group in half** – this best done with a group of at least 20 children. **One half form a large circle** by standing with legs wide and arms outstretched towards the next person, making a circular barrier.

**Split the remaining children so half enter the inside of the circle, and half stay on the outside.**

**Now read out words alternately from the inside / outside lists below.** As you read an inside word, everyone inside the circle should **turn themselves into a statue of that word.** They can do this alone, or team up, but it must be done in silence. Then when you read an outside word, everyone outside the circle must make a statue in response.

The statues can be as realistic, or as abstract as they wish – so they could simply show how the word makes them feel. If they don't know what a specific word means, simply create a statue based on how the sound of the words make them feel. An explanation should be given later.

Ask them to make quick decisions to create their statues, what is their gut response when they hear the word?

For each word, everyone inside or outside the circle should form a statue of some kind. As you move on to the next word, the group can release their statues and watch the other group.

Inside	Outside
Tall grasses	Gunfire
Wild flowers	Queues for food
Pomegranate trees	Rifles slung across shoulders
Birds on branches	Soldiers with heavy boots
Fountains	Exploding bombs
Prince / Princess	Locked gates

You can **swap round** half way through the list, so that the circle makers get to be inside / outside instead. Or, you can simply repeat the whole game with the group the other way around.

The group that are making the circle barrier should be watching the statues form and dissolve. As they watch, ask them to **consider how they feel** as they see the inside or outside statues.

At the end of the game, ask for some adjectives to describe how they felt as they saw the statues – how do the adjectives for inside and outside differ? Reflect on, and discuss, how you might feel living in a place where there are extreme differences? Would you find it easy or difficult? Scary or worrying?

### **Extension: The inside / outside feelings orchestra**

Split the room in half, label one side inside, one side outside. Everyone should **pick the most successful / favourite statue** that they made (or they could copy one they saw from someone else). Ask everyone to move slowly to the correct side of the room for their statue across a count from 10 - 1, and as you reach 1, everyone must **hold their statue still, as powerfully as they can.** Remind them to 'dial up' their statue as far as it will go – stretch to the ends of fingers, make facial expressions bold, etc.

Once everyone is held in their positions, ask them to hold in their mind a feeling or emotion that their position conjures for them (eg. powerful, dangerous, light, bubbly - it could be any word they feel, it need not be a pure emotion, but their body shape should influence the word they choose). With everyone still and in silence, **move around the room, tap individuals on the shoulder** – this is the signal for them to say their word out loud. They can choose the volume, a whisper, a shout, a giggle, whatever suits their emotion / feeling.

Continue to move around the room, tapping shoulders, so that you **play the inside / outside orchestra of feelings**. It is important that only the person tapped be speaking, the rest of the group must stay silent, listening, and ready to speak if tapped.

Afterwards, ask the group to reflect on the variety of differing emotions and feelings created for inside and outside. How distinctive are the two settings? What happens if you hear lots of outside sounds in a row? Does this change if you hear lots of inside feelings together? What if you hear lots of inside feelings, interspersed with one or two outside feelings? Can you connect this to the moment in the story where Chiara feels the protecting walls have been breached?

### 3. HELLO STRANGER

**Aim: to step into Chiara's place and experience meeting a stranger**

**In pairs, face each other** about a pace apart. Imagine that you have never seen the person standing in front of you. Take a moment to look at them carefully. **What can you see about them that is the same as you, and what can you see that is different?** You might notice things like eye colour, hair colour, height, clothes.

Now ask the class to reflect on whether any of these things give you information about whether that person is friend or foe? Hopefully they will say no – it's impossible to tell from just what you can see!

With their partner they are going to start 3 paces away from each other. **Each pair should invent a sequence of 6 movements** that lead up to them shaking hands or greeting in some form. They can use words, but they must imagine that they speak different languages. If you have children in class that are bilingual, encourage them to use their additional languages!

They should take it in turns to move. They might step forward, or look away, or turn back. **Each movement should show how they feel about meeting this stranger**. Are they excited, nervous, worried, shy, bold? Does how they feel change over the sequence of movements? Do they get more bold? Do they get more tentative? Is one person more forthright than the other? Does the movement of person affect the other person's movement, does it change how they react?

Once they have their sequence of 6 movements, each pair should share theirs with the class. What do you notice about the greetings? How did you feel as you performed yours? What do these greetings tell you about the moment that Chiara and Massoud meet in the story? Discuss how we communicate with each other when we don't speak the same language?

### 4. CITY MONSTER SOUNDSCAPES

**Aim: To explore the imagery of the city through sound**

**In small groups** look carefully at the images from the book – both words and pictures – that describe different aspects of the 'city monster'. Each group can look at a different page of the book, or every group can look at multiple pages.

In their groups ask them to **create a monster**, inspired by the imagery and pictures they have looked at. They must make the monster out of their own bodies. Once they are happy with their monster, they should consider what sounds it makes. Try to **encourage them to invent a range of sounds of different volumes**. What sound does their monster make when it is sleeping? Or when it is hungry? When it is hurt, or when it is contented?

Once each group has a variety of monster sounds, **ask everyone to sit in a circle, still grouped together**. Share with them a series of hand signals that you can use to start or stop and lower or increase volume. You will need to be able to do this for the group as a whole, and for individual groups.

Ask each group to start with the quietest sound their monster made. Start each group individually, building up the volume and lowering it as you wish.

Now ask each group to choose half their group to make one of the sounds they invented, and the others in the group to choose a different one. Again, **build up the sounds in the room by bringing in different groups at a time and raising or lowering the volume**. You can repeat this so that in each group the individuals make different sounds. Play around with different combinations of raised and lowered sounds. This is most effective when loud sounds are used sparingly! Try to find as many different combinations as you can of low volume sounds.

**If possible turn off any lights so the room is darker**, but you can still be seen. **Ask for individuals to take on the roles of Chiara and her brother**. They should sit or lie in the middle of the circle of monster groups, with their eyes shut. Their job is to think about how the sounds they hear make them feel.

To start the soundscape, ask **each of the monster groups to breathe in and out together**. Each group can choose how relaxed or anxious their monster's breathing is. Be aware to go steady with this as some children may hyperventilate. If a group is breathing in and out at the same time, they do not need to breathe loudly for it to be effective. Introduce each group one at a time, until the whole room is beathing audibly.

Now start the monster sounds on low volume and build up slowly. As before, play with different combinations of sounds.

**When you quieten the monster, ask Chiara and her brother for their reaction**. What do they find more scary, loud or softer sounds? Can quiet sounds be as threatening as loud sounds? How did they feel when just the breathing was happening?

**Swap round so that other children can try being Chiara and her brother**. Once you have heard a few reactions from different children, look back at the pictures in the book and see if it changes what you imagine as you read the book.

## 5. FEELING BRAVE

**Aim: To imagine the feelings that Massoud's gift inspires in Chiara**

This game can be done just in a classroom - ideally you would **stand separately**, but you can also do it sitting at desks, or just standing in your place in the class room.

**Hold out your hand, palm up** and imagine that sitting on your palm is the tiny carved cat that Massoud gives to Chiara. Look closely, and **imagine the details on the cat**. Touch the imaginary carving with your other hand – is it rough or smooth? How heavy does it feel?

Now close your palm tightly around the cat. And put that hand in your pocket or by your side. Look straight ahead. Squeeze the cat and **feel that the courage of the cat is travelling up your arm and into your heart**.

Does that change how you feel? Does it change how you stand? Might you stand taller, stick out your chest, raise your head, plant your feet different. **Make any adjustments to feel the courage of the cat inside you**.

After a moment like this, ask everyone to relax. **Discuss what changed and if it made you feel differently?** Did you feel courageous and powerful? Could you use the cat to help you feel brave at other times, just like Chiara does?

