

Conventions based on theatre practice but easily available to the classroom teacher

Constructed by Dorothy Heathcote 1988 / revised 2006

A note to be considered when using these conventions

Whichever type you select has the effect of introducing the presence or sign or signifier of an-OTHER which creates "something to stare at or consider" within the frame of power you wish the class to use when negotiating with the "evidence" of another person or group. Productive tension will always have to be a feature of such encounters. The basic tension will become present because the class care to enquire into a situation. Careful framing of point of view and need must be attended to, otherwise class are merely entertained.

- Dorothy Heathcote, letter to Eileen Pennington (31.12.06).

[In the letter to Eileen, Dorothy stated "I've been bothered for some time that I've not revisited the conventions". She included a number of amendments to the conventions list, which have been incorporated below.]

SENSE OF A REAL PERSON, OR GROUP OF PERSONS.

1. Role / roles actually present, naturalistic, yet significantly behaving, giving and accepting responses.
2. The role / roles actually present, except framed as a film. That is, people have permission to stare but not intrude. 'Film' can be stopped and restarted, or re-run.
3. The role present as in 'monument'. Can be talked about, walked around, and even sculptured afresh if so framed.
4. The role present as in 'monument', but with the convention that effigy can be brought into life-like response and then returned to effigy. Monuments can only know what has been carved on or about them by the maker.
5. The roles as in a wall fresco or tomb carving which is fixed to floor or wall.
6. The roles as in 3,4,5, but capable only of hearing what observers are saying. This causes selected language to be generated by them.
7. The roles as above but activated to speak but not move.

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8. The roles depicted in picture: removed from actual life, as in a photographic slide of roles, a painting, a photograph or drawing. This includes those made by

a class, as well as prepared depictions.

9. A drawing seen in the making, or someone important to the action, as on a blackboard.
 10. Stylized depiction of someone, e.g. identikit picture made by class in frame, e.g. as detectives, or researchers or novelists requiring to illustrate by using coins or medals depicted iconically.
 - 11a. Stylized depiction of someone except made before hand, so is 'fait accompli'.
 - 11b. As in 10 except depiction is presented as a jigsaw to be fitted together by class. E.g. broken stained glass window or damaged painting requiring reassembly.
 12. Life size (cardboard) model with clothing (real) or role, e.g. the armour of King Henry VIII.
 13. e.g. 'framed' as if in a museum or sale rooms. 'This is the dress worn by Florence Nightingale when she met Queen Victoria after Scutari'.
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14. Life sized model, except the class is dressing the model so as to see 'how it was' on that day when these events happened.
15. Clothing of person cast off in disarray e.g. remains of a tramp's presence, or a murder, and escape as in a highwayman situation.
16. Objects to represent person's interests. Works as above, but more closely can indicate concerns rather than appearance, e.g. a ring of a Borgia.
17. An account of a person spoken by another person in naturalistic fashion, e.g. 'Well when last I saw him he seemed alright. I never dreamed anything was wrong'.
18. An account of a person written as if from that person, but read by someone else, e.g. a diary found by chance or deliberately borrowed temporarily or stolen to cause permanent loss; or letter.
19. An account written by the person who now reads it to others, e.g. a policeman giving evidence or a confession. The role is present in this case but in contact through their writing as an author might well be. This mixes two conventions - 2 in the list and this one.
20. An account written by someone, of someone else and read by yet another.

21. Story told of another, in order to bring that person close to the action, e.g. 'I saw him open a safe once. It was an incredible performance. I'm not sure if he would assist us though'.

22. A report of an event but formalised by authority or ritual.

DOCUMENTS AND / OR LETTERS

23. e.g. an account of bravery in battle on an occasion of the presenting of posthumous medals.

24. A letter read in the voice of the writer. This is an emanation of a specific presence, not just any voice, communicating the words.

25a. A letter read in the voice of the writer, but the letter is read by another with no attempt to portray the person who wrote it, but still expressing feeling.

25b. Any document or written account other than a letter, which refers to a specific person or event as in a newspaper article, or a biographic form, or even a filled in application form or a passport page. This can be a will written in the first person.

26. Letter read without feeling, e.g. as evidence, or accusation in a formal situation.

27. Voice of a person overheard talking to another - informal language, i.e. a naturalistic tone.

28. Voice of a person overheard talking to another, but in formal language.

29. A conversation overheard. (Persons not seen). Deliberate eavesdropping as in spying.

30. Report of a conversation, written and spoken by another.

31. Reported conversation with two people reading the respective 'parts'.

32. Private reading of conversations, reported as overheard.

33. The finding of a cryptic code message, e.g. 'tramps' or 'spies'.

34. Signature of a person found, e.g. a half-burned paper.

35. Sign of a particular person discovered, e.g. Scarlet Pimpernel (his special mark).

36. A Coat of Arms, initials placed upon objects denoting ownership.