

## **Let Me Entertain You**

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As an administrator I am sometimes entertained as I visit and observe classes. Language Arts 7 was on my agenda for the day and I had the pleasure of discovering the 'bucket of doom'. It turned out that the lesson was about limericks and the students were going to write their own limericks. The lesson proceeded with several examples of limericks, then the class as a whole composed a rather nonsensical limerick, and finally it was the students turn. Topics were chosen by students bravely putting their hands in the 'bucket of doom'. When the teacher ceremoniously brought it out, the students appropriately groaned and then began the ordeal of placing their hands in the 'bucket of doom'. The bucket turned out to be no more than a cardboard box with slips of paper inside. The students giggled and groaned as they selected their topics. A simple characterization and some animated gestures by the teacher brought life to the class and engaged the students in a very positive way.

How important is it to infuse some theatrics into lesson plans? I have heard teachers say that they are not there to entertain the students, but to teach them. Teachers contend that they are not there to compete with television or movies or other forms of entertainment. But how do you expect to engage students unless something catches their attention? I have discovered that students will embrace your efforts to make class 'fun' and will not compare you to well-known comedians.

When I thought about this topic, I remembered something that happened during graduation one year. It was reported during the graduation ceremony that I was a rather 'crazy' teacher because I had crawled between the desks mimicking the action of soldiers in the trenches. It was a very simple act that obviously caught the attention of the students and was remembered two years later by them.

As I view different classes and different learning styles, I have noticed that a little drama, a little theatrics can really have a profound effect on the class. You can't compete and you do not have to compete with television. I have seen the simplest acts lead to heightened student engagement. Students respond well to the simplest ploys to get them involved. I discovered something called *The Hat* on line. This simple program allows me to draw names at random. I never choose who goes first; I let *The Hat* choose. I seldom choose partners; I let *The Hat* choose. There is an appropriate drum roll and then the name or names appear out of the hat. The students wait expectantly to see when their name will be drawn. Best of all, there is no argument about who goes first or who partners with whom. Another simple gimmick I stumbled upon is when I introduce a new seating plan. I write the names for each table group on a card (I have tables in my room), I then cut up the cards into crazy patterns and when students come in they find their table partners by sorting out the jigsaw pieces. Do I rival the shows on television? Not at all. Do the students respond well to any effort to enliven the class and make it more fun? Yes, they do.

Teachers who learn the fine art of drama in presenting topics are rewarded for their efforts. I see teachers using exaggerated expressions, silly accents, a little rolling of the eyes, and strange little dances to achieve positive interactions with the students. I have even seen a teacher who launched forth with a very poor Alexander Ovechkin accent be rewarded with a simple solution to an off task student. I have a teacher who loves to recall her Newfoundland accent when she wants to scold students for being a little off task. I have heard teachers 'singing' their lessons and encouraging students to do the same.

When a teacher attempts to enliven a class, the students do not compare, they appreciate. Students like to smile and to laugh, they want to be engaged, and they will respond in a positive way to your efforts to make the topics more interesting.