**The Cloth of Dreams: using poetry**

In this unit students develop and present a piece of drama based on the poem, The Cloths of Heaven, by W.B. Yeats to develop their understanding of the poem.

They will:

* consolidate and extend belief in roles
* manipulate drama elements to enhance meaning
* show the consolidation and extension of movement and language skills
* critically evaluate drama

and through drama;

* enhance their understanding and appreciation of the poem

Drama forms:

* improvisation
* reader’s theatre

## Resources

He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven
Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet;
But I, being poor, have only my dreams,
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.
W.B. Yeats

## Learning activities

### Getting started

1. Divide the class into two groups. Explain that each group will be making something for a drama lesson. Give out materials, such as sheets of large chart paper taped together, alfoil, gold paper, thread, paint, rolls of crepe paper, paint, glue, glitter, and so on. Group one is to construct a cloth of their dreams. Group two is to construct the cloths of heaven.
2. While giving instructions to the groups, use words from the poem, for example; heaven’s embroidered cloths enwrought with golden and silver light and cloth of dreams. When the artwork is complete, give out the poem and read it to the students. Select some students to read it again.
3. In groups students discuss the meaning of the poem. Who may have written it? Why might the author have written it? When may it have been written?

### Taking on roles in situations, developing drama & performing

1. In groups students create a character who will recite the poem. Hot-seat the character.
2. Groups make up stories around the character and poem. Each group presents a frozen moment from their story. Groups improvise their story, trying to include the words of the poem as part of the script.
3. Pin the “cloths of heaven” on a wall as a backdrop and hand the cloth of dreams to each group in turn to work with it.
4. Each group presents its improvisation to the rest of the class using the backdrop, the cloth of dreams and the poem.

### Responding

Discuss each group’s interpretation of the poem. Write about the presentations in drama journals.

## Assessment of students

* Observe students’ drama work and their process of working.
* Analyse students’ oral and written comments and other responses to their drama work.
* Consider the following questions about students’ learning in drama:
	+ How well are they able to consolidate and extend belief in roles? How effectively do they use voice and gesture to characterise and communicate the roles? To what extent are they showing a serious commitment to their roles? To what extent are they able to depart from stereotypes and create new and challenging roles?
	+ What evidence is there that students are manipulating drama elements to enhance meaning in their work? How are mood, focus, contrast and tension being developed and used in their work? To what extent are new techniques being sought out and tried? How is the use of symbol becoming more evident in their work? How effectively are students working together?
	+ Which movement and language skills are being consolidated and extended as they perform? Which movement and language skills need further development?
	+ How well are they able to critically evaluate drama? What else are they learning through their drama experiences?
* Consider the following question about other learning:
	+ How has the drama work contributed to the students’ understanding and appreciation of the poem?

## Extension activities

Develop whole-class movement work based upon the cloth of dreams. Experiment with large pieces of cloth to develop ideas further and explore symbol and focus in the piece. Students write poems about personal dreams. What is your dream for the future of the world? With your students, develop performance pieces around these texts through improvisation, movement and reader’s theatre.