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# Dramatization as a method of teaching geography

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Dramatization can be an effective method of teaching the social studies, geography and history as well as other subjects in the curriculum. Dramatization may take the form of plays, pageantry, tableaux, pantomime and less formal dramatic activities.

The contents of drama are wide ranging. Through drama, children may look for e.g. at social themes (housing, pollution) historical events (civil war, rebellion, industrial revolution) concepts such as love, deceit and so on. The very versatility of drama in terms of content makes it ideal as a teaching medium.

There are several reasons why it is especially useful in teaching. These are:

- pupils find the activities enjoyable and fulfilling
- there are no right or wrong answers
- less emphasis is placed on the skills of reading and writing
- learning new ideas can be linked to everyday experiences
- the activities offer opportunities to develop social skills

'Man the Accused' and 'Weathering'<sup>2</sup> are two examples of dramatization that teachers may use to stimulate interest in the learning and teaching of environmental issues and processes in physical geography.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Man the Accused' was written by Diane Devotta, a Secondary 3 Geography student from the Fairfield Methodist Secondary School and staged in conjunction with 'Geography through Drama' organized by the Ministry of Education to promote interest in the study of Geography.

<sup>2</sup> 'Weathering' was written by a student and submitted as a course assignment for the Diploma in Education.

At the end of each play, the teacher could discuss with the pupils or students such environmental issues as pollution, destruction of wildlife and processes related to the disintegration or weathering of rocks. Geography taught this way can become real and exciting.



A scene from 'Man The Accused'

## **MAN THE ACCUSED**

### **List of Characters:**

Mother Nature	-	MN
Sir Owl	-	SO
Land	-	L
Court Attendant	-	CA
King Neptune	-	KN
Air	-	A
Student	-	S
Court Audience	-	C

Curtains rise. Scene depicts a courtroom in a clearing of a forest. C is making a lot of noise and hurls accusations at S who enters at that moment from the opposite end of the stage.

CA : Order! Could I have some quiet please? This court is now in session. All rise for the Honourable Mother Nature.  
*(C quietens. MN enters and takes her seat.)*

MN : You may be seated.  
*(All sit.)*

MN : Court Attendant, could we first have the brief facts about this case?

CA : Certainly your honour. The accused is the whole of mankind, represented in this court hearing by a 15 year old species. The accusation – destroying the earth, her land, her seas and her atmosphere.  
*(CA glances at S.)*

CA : The accused has chosen to defend herself and the Prosecution council is headed by the knowledgeable Sir Owl.

MN : This is a very grave allegation (sighs). Very well, let the case begin. Prosecution, you may call your first witness.  
*(SO rises.)*

SO Thank you, your Honour. The prosecution wishes to call upon Land as its first witness.  
*(L rises and approaches the witness stand where he takes his oath.)*

CA (With a bible in one hand) Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

L : I do.

MN : Prosecution, you may begin your line of questioning.

SO : Thank you, your Honour. Land, *(turns to face Land)* do you recognise the accused?

L : I do. He is man. He engages in a lot of activities that involve me.

SO : And exactly how have these activities been damaging to your health and well being?

L : (excitedly) Oh! He's done all sorts of things and has hurt me a great deal. He's been taking almost all my mineral ores from me, and at such an alarming rate that I don't even have time to replace them.

SO : And what does he use these minerals for?

L : He uses them for his industries and all THEY do is produce tonnes and tonnes of rubbish, some of which are toxic and which he so conveniently dumps on me! And that's not all. He cuts down so much forests, about 11-15 million hectares every year, that the wind has carried away much of my topsoil.

SO : And what has this loss of topsoil done to you?

L : Well, the results are that many of my surfaces have become huge, useless and barren dustbowls. And who is to blame for all this? Him! (Points accusing finger at S)

SO : What about the animals?

L : He hunts them down, not only for food, but for their fur or skin as well. Look for yourself and you will see the minute number of buffalos, jaguars or whales that there are today. And do you know that they kill baby elephants for their tusks? There are only around 500,000 elephants in Africa today, due to them. What do they want the tusks for? For ornaments and decorative purposes. They don't need them, they just kill those baby elephants for greed, nothing but greed!  
(C gasps.)

SO : No further questions, your Honour.

MN : Defence Council, your witness?

S : (*wearily and uneasily*) Er, yes, your Honour, thank you.  
(*S rises and is in the centre of court, He faces L.*)

S : (slowly and shakily) Land, I don't deny any of what you have said. I cannot. But man has made attempts to clear up the mess he's created. In the United States, for example, for every dollar spent on making of bomb grade materials, 45 cents goes towards the managing of the wastes produced. Man is also trying to reforest many areas which he has destroyed. In Haiti, 27 million seedlings were planted between 1982 and 1986.

SO I object your Honour! The Defendant is not questioning the witness but making poor excuses to defend himself. Why does mankind make bombs in the first place, if its only result is the destruction of living things and nuclear pollution? And will a mere 27 million seedling replace the 50,000 square kilometres of closed tropical forest logged rather destroyed annually?  
(C *nods in agreement.*)

MN : Very well. Objection sustained. Defence Council, if you will not question the witness, let the Prosecution Council call its next witness please. Land, you may step down.  
(*Land returns to his seat. So does S.*)

SO : The Prosecution calls King Neptune of the Seas.  
(*KN comes up to the witness stand where he takes his oath. He has a blackened patch covering half his face.*)

SO : Now King Neptune, my question for you is the same as for the land. How has man abused you and all those in your domain?

KN : (*eyes flashing, and in a thundering voice*) Do you see this blackened patch on my face? Have you any idea who caused it? He did! (*points at S*) This patch is oil. I got it when a ship, the Exxon Valdez spilled 10 million gallons of crude oil in Alaska.

SO : But what is happening to the animals?

KN : They die of suffocation of course!

(C *cast sympathetic glances at KN and shake their heads in bewilderment.*)

SO You have my sympathies, King Neptune. No more questions, your Honour.

MN : Defence Council, do you wish to question this witness?

S : (*Uncomfortably*) Er, no your Honour.

C : Boo! Boo! He's a coward. He can't even defend himself. Boo!

MN : (*Loudly*) Quiet! Order in this court! Prosecution, call your next witness.

SO : The Prosecution calls upon Air as its next witness.  
(A *comes up to the witness stand and takes his oath. He has a raspy voice and coughs violently.*)

SO : Now Air, you've hear the question before. Why don't you try and give us answer?

A : (*coughing*) I will try. Firstly, man is responsible for the "green house" effect. He uses cars and builds factories which spew carbon dioxide, CFC's and nitrogen oxide into the atmosphere which heat up the earth. It is predicted that the earth will heat up by 3 to 5 degrees by the middle of the next century. Icebergs will melt around the Arctic and Antarctic, thus raising the World's sea level and flooding coastal zones. Then there the explosions from the nuclear power plants. Remember the Chernobyl incident of April 1986! 156 km of farmland in the Soviet Union were destroyed (*Air starts coughing*).

This is very serious.

A : You think that is serious? Do you know what else Man has done? He has created aerosol cans, polystyrene packaging, styrofoam and cleaning agents in organic solvents and thus released CFC molecules into the air which destroys the ozone layer. This lets in harmful ultra violet rays which weaken the immune systems of many animals and also damage the DNA in many cells, thus killing them. They are extremely dangerous to all life on earth.

(Pause.)

MN : You mean, this is really happening, these harmful ultra violet rays are seeping in at this very moment?

A : Yes, Your Honour (sighs). It is.

(Pause. All turn and look at S. All the characters except S shout, he's guilty! I tell you, he's guilty! Death, he deserves death for what he's done! Guilty! Guilty! All advance toward S. CA attempts to protect S.)

MN : Order! May I have order in this court? Order! I say, come to order!

(Suddenly ...)

SO : Look! Look up there in the sky. That cloud! It's acid rain, everybody run! It's acid rain! Run for your lives!

All scream, Oh no! Acid rain! Run! Run! Save yourselves!  
(All exit stage. Curtains fall.)

----- END OF PLAY -----

## WEATHERING

5 characters	:	Mechanical Weathering (MW)
		Rock 1      Granite
		Rock 2      Limestone
		Rock 3      Schist
		Rock 4      Sandstone

Some rocks were gossiping when they see Mechanical Weathering approaching.

Rocks                    Oh, no! Here comes Mechanical Weathering! He's come to destroy us. Quick! Run and hide!  
*(Music to welcome Mechanical Weathering)*

MW                    Mm ... It is so nice and quiet here. I love visiting places like this, where there is a marked diurnal range of temperatures due to direct sun-heating by day and rapid radiation by night. Under such conditions, I'm able to do a lot of work.  
*(MW sees a rock)*

Ah, ha! I see a rock. I shall put some water into its cracks. At night, when the temperature drops to freezing-point, the water will freeze. Do you, Rock 1, know what will happen then?

Rock 1                Oh yes, oh yes! When the temperature drops, the water in my cracks and joints will freeze, and will expand in volume. This will exert pressure on me, causing my body to shatter. With time, my body weakens and I shall slowly but surely dis-in-te-grade!  
*(Shows signs of disintegrating)*

MW                    Yes, precisely, this is called frost shattering by freeze-thaw action. Now, lets see, what I can do to the other rocks.

Rock 2 : I hope, Mechanical Weathering does not see me. The last time he came around, he did considerable damage to my body. My surface layer became so intensely heated while my inner layers maintained a constantly lower temperature, that it caused my surface layer to "peel-off", a process called exfoliation.

MW I think I shall carry out some pressure unloading.  
*(Approaches Rock 3 and Rock 4 and removes their loads)*. There, that should relieve you of some pressure.

Rock 3 and 4 : Oh, no! With the release of pressure by unloading, our bodies become newly exposed. Before long, we shall form curvilinear joints. This will cause our curve rock shell to pull away from the rest of the body. This process is called sheeting.  
*(Starts to cry and goes off the stage)*

MW I think I've done enough for today. Doing the work of weathering is such a tiring task. But I must admit I love my job because I enjoy watching rocks disintegrate. I shall take a rest now and come back again some other day.

END OF PLAY - - - - -