

# Digital Drama Drop-ins – Teacher Notes

## Vocal Performance with Andy Craven-Griffiths

### KS3 – Devising Performance Poetry

#### Part 1: Vocal performance

There are certain things that are basic to a good vocal performance because without them you may fail to communicate the words.

Eye contact            But not so much that you start a staring contest, and not so little that you seem distracted or embarrassed.

Speaking clearly     Without mumbling or going ‘erm’ too much.

Right Tempo           Not speaking so quick that people miss what you’re saying or feel stressed, but also isn’t so slow that they get bored.

Right volume         Not speaking so loudly it hurts peoples’ ears, but not so quietly that you can’t be heard.

Practice these basics by doing them deliberately badly, so you can feel that end of the spectrum. Then exaggerate doing them well in order to feel the difference. We’ll do it in rounds:

Round 1.            Tell your partner which superpower you would choose and why, but always at the wrong volume, either too loud or too quiet. Or switching between.

Round 2.            Tell your partner your first memory, but at the wrong speed, either too fast or too slow. Try both.

Round 3.            Tell your partner what you think will be different in the future, but unclearly, mumbling and with lots of mms and erms.

Round 4.            Finally, choose one of these subjects to talk about again, either super powers, or first memories, or the future, and try to get all of the basics right. Right volume, right tempo, speaking clearly, and making eye contact.

#### Changing meaning through vocal performance

Intonation:

Intonation is the way that we go up in pitch and down in pitch when we talk. We can use intonation to stress certain words. By stressing different words, we can change meaning:

<b>She</b> didn't steal that phone -	So someone else stole that phone.
She <b>didn't</b> steal that phone -	But other people think she did.
She didn't <b>steal</b> that phone -	She got it some other way. Perhaps she was given it, perhaps she found it or borrowed it.
She didn't steal <b>that</b> phone -	So she stole a different phone.
She didn't steal that <b>phone</b> -	But she stole something else.

Have a go now in pairs, and see how many different meanings you can convey by stressing different words the sentence:

*Everyone I've met thinks David Attenborough's the best.*

Maybe you can even find extra meanings by stressing more than one word?

Here's a few more you might try:

*Right, so I'm in charge.*

*He prefers to eat them with ice cream.*

*Sometimes, people just don't care.*

### Emotion:

We can also control the meaning of words by saying them with different emotions. You might simply choose an emotion and use it to say the sentence. Take this next sentence:

*Oh! Thank you so much.*

Can you say it gratefully? Sarcastically? Guiltily? Angrily?

You may also produce different emotional performances by imagining different situations that lead up to the words being said. For instance, imagine it's Christmas morning and you get your dream present, a jet pack, now say the line:

*Thank you, this is exactly what I wanted.*

Instead, imagine you hoped for that jet pack but got socks. Now, say the sentence again:

Try saying this next sentence in different ways by first coming up with different situations. Try to be clear about the emotion being felt in that situation. Share with the class and see if others can guess:

- Which emotion you're experiencing?
- What the situation is behind the emotion.

Here's the sentence:

*What? So you've made pizza?*

Pauses:

To indicate doubt: Without a pause, this exchange seems fairly genuine:

*My mate asked if I liked his new haircut.  
I told him, "yeah, it's nice."*

With a pause or two, it can indicate doubt, or that somebody isn't being fully truthful:

*My mate asked if I liked his new haircut.  
I told him (PAUSE) yeah, it's (PAUSE) nice.*

To delay information: *This doesn't necessarily change the meaning of the words, but giving the listener time to assume what we're about to say allows us to surprise them. For instance:*

*Some people take toys from their baby sister  
[PAUSE]  
so that she can learn to crawl towards them.*

*Some people volunteer to help their sibling do homework  
[PAUSE]  
then tell them all the wrong answers.*

**Part 2: Writing our own lines**

We're going to write lines to go into a list poem. A list poem is great because the lines fit the subject or title but can go in any order. Our list poems will be called, *Things I Know*. They don't have to just be full of facts though, and can include:

- Facts            That we know more about moon surface than sea bed.
- Opinions        That the best kind of olives are ones that are stuffed with stuff that's not olives.
- Experiences    That when you have a laughing fit, it often infects your friends.

We're going to start our poems with a few particular lines that will allow us to practice controlling meaning through performance:

**First line:**

A line that expresses an opinion some people have that you *disagree* with. It might be a stereotype:

*That all old people are grumpy.*

It might be an opinion:

*That cats are better than dogs.*

So long as it is something you do *NOT* believe. Your vocal performance will make your belief clear.

### **Second line:**

A line about a lie you have told. It will be written as though true, and your performance will demonstrate that it is a lie.

It might just be the lie:

*That I can speak fluent Danish.*

Or it might be structured “That when [the thing that led up to the lie] I said [the lie]”:

*That when [my sister sang Beyonce at me] I said [“Yeah. You sound good.”]*

### **Third line:**

This line will make it seem like something nice is happening, then add information that shows it is bad, or vice versa:

That some people [Something that seems nice / horrible]  
... because / so that [something that is the opposite]

### **Extension:**

Keep building your poem by adding any other things you ‘know’. Remember, facts, opinions, and experiences can all be included. The prompts below will give you lots of ideas. Use whichever ones spark interesting or amusing ideas.

Once you have written the list poem, you can change the order of the lines on the list, and then practice your vocal performance so that you are doing all of the basics well, and also controlling certain lines through intonation, emotion, and pauses.

After practicing in pairs, read them out to the class!

### **Prompts for *Things I Know* poem**

Every line should start with the word “that...”

The first set of prompts are phrases for you to fill in the details. The second set are categories within which you may have interesting facts, opinions, or experiences.

#### **Set 1:**

- That some people think [x] is more important than [Y]
- That my mum / dad / brother....
- That I used to think...
- That in the future...
- That the first thing I remember...
- That obviously...

- That [an interesting fact most people won't have heard before]
- That I feel scared / excited / [any other emotion] when....
- That people waste time.... [on what?]
- That people lie about....
- That if you [x] then [y will happen]
- That not everyone....
- That one day I will...
- That I have never...
- That [x's] are really just [ys]
  - o this line is about similes and metaphors, for example "That broccoli is really just tiny trees", or "That rhinos are really just unicorns who spend too long at the gym." Etc.

Set 2:

- Famous events
- Famous people
- Animals
- A food
- A sport
- Dreams
- Super powers
- The human body
- Technology
- Science
- Space
- Things people lie about
- Book / film / song
- Young people.
- A smell / taste / sound

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