

6 Step into a moment

KEY
6

DESCRIPTION

Students co-create an imagined context then briefly take on the point of view of someone involved. This key:

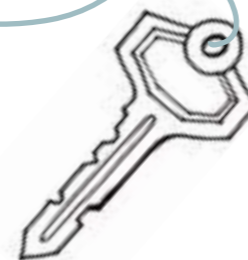
- is suitable for creative exploration of an imagined context, or for deepening inquiry in an area of real-world curriculum study
- stimulates students' imagination and helps them develop some of the skills and techniques used in writing and other art forms – teachers and students explore one moment in detail rather than an unfolding narrative
- is useful for exploring some of the techniques used by authors, filmmakers and directors to create atmosphere and moments of tension
- has similarities with 'Step into history' and 'Tackle a problem', which both use the same technique of stepping into a fictional moment, although here the focus is on how atmosphere and tension are created through dramatic imagination

Take care if working with historical contexts, or cultural or sacred stories where it is important to respect the original events, or narrative. If in doubt, choose a different key.

PLANNING

- Select a moment from a narrative you want to explore with the students. Think about how this moment can be used to extend the students' learning and might be developed in the classroom. Moments that work well are ones that capture the crux of the narrative – a moment in history or a major theme in an unfolding story, for example – and often involve a crisis or a point of no return.
- Think about where this event is taking place and what might be nearby. This will prepare you for developing the students' dramatic imagination during the session.
- Decide on the character you're going to represent.
- Plan a simple action you're going to perform in front of the students. This action will be the only moment explored during the session.
- Create and rehearse a line to be spoken aloud in step 5. This could be an inner thought of the character (teacher-in-role voice) or it could be one sentence of storytelling (narrator voice).
- Provide the students with paper and pens.

METHOD



- 1 Choose a moment to stop the story: "Let's stop here for a moment."
- 2 Tell the students you're going to represent a character in the story.
- 3 Stand up and carry out the action you planned earlier.
- 4 Relax. Discuss the action.
- 5 Repeat the action and speak the line of text.
- 6 Relax. Discuss the line.
- 7 Discuss the location of this event and what might be close by.
- 8 Ask, "What sounds do you suppose there might be at this moment in the story?"
- 9 "Where might the light be coming from?"
- 10 "What about darkness, where might there be darkness?"
- 11 "What's moving and what's still?"
- 12 Use a narrator voice to repeat some of the students' ideas while performing the actions
- 13 Suggest, "This would make a great passage in the story, don't you think? Why not grab a piece of paper and write? Start with..." (provide the students with an opening line).
- 14 Give the students time to write, then prompt them using the aspects of dramatic imagination – sound/silence, movement/stillness, darkness/light.
- 15 Continue, stopping occasionally to ask the students to share some of their ideas.
- 16 Write some of the students' ideas on the board to create a shared passage of writing. Develop this by extending vocabulary and suggesting metaphors, similes and other ideas.
- 17 Ask the students to put down their pens and imagine being the people in the story performing the action.
- 18 As the students perform the action, read the extract of shared writing you've written on the board, and invite reflection.

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EXAMPLE 1 HAUNUI-A-NANAIA



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- 1 Introduce the students to the story of Haunui-a-Nanaia and how he named the awa (rivers) in the lower North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand.* Read from the start to the moment when Haunui-a-Nanaia first reaches the Manawatū River.
- 2 Tell the students, "When I stand up I'm going to represent Haunui-a-Nanaia at this point in the story."
- 3 Carry out the action: enact walking with a staff. Then stop, with wide eyes and a sharp intake of breath, and stand absolutely still.
- 4 Relax. Discuss the action: "What's he doing?"
- 5 Repeat the action and speak a line: "So great was his apprehension as to his ability to cross the river that, metaphorically speaking, his heart almost stood still."
- 6 Relax. Discuss the line: "What do you make of that?"
- 7 Discuss the location of this event (you could show a map of the river mouth as it appears today*). Discuss what might be close by. "So Haunui-a-Nanaia has arrived at the mouth of this huge river as it flows into the sea. There are waves rolling in from one side, and vast sand dunes on the other. What else might he see around him?" Students might offer, "Shells," "Driftwood," etc.
- 8 Ask, "What sounds might be heard at this point in the story?" Students might say, "The rushing of the river, the crashing of the surf, the calls of sea birds," etc.
- 9 Ask, "Where might the light be coming from?" Students might say, "The sun sparkles on the water," etc.
- 10 Ask, "What about darkness?" Students might say, "In the hollows in the sand."
- 11 Ask, "What's moving and what's still?" Students might say, "The water is moving, but Haunui-a-Nanaia is standing still. And so is his heart."
- 12 Repeat some of the students' ideas while performing the action: "Haunui-a-Nanaia stood motionless, gazing at the water as it flowed out to sea. The light from the sun sparkled on the river, while darkness lurked in the hollows on the sand."
- 13 Suggest, "This would make a great passage in the story, don't you think? Why not grab a piece of paper and write? Start with 'And so, as Haunui-a-Nanaia stood beside the river...'"
- 14 Give the students time to write and then prompt them using the dimensions of dramatic imagination: "What could Haunui-a-Nanaia see? What could he hear? Where's the dark again?" Emphasise that we are focused on writing about what was going on around Haunui-a-Nanaia – it's not our place to make up thoughts in his mind, or to put words in his mouth.
- 15 Continue, stopping occasionally to ask the students to share some of their ideas.
- 16 Write some of the students' sentences on the board to create a shared passage of writing. Develop this by extending vocabulary and suggesting metaphors, similes, and other ideas.
- 17 "Can I ask you now to put down your pens and stand up. Imagine for a moment that you are Haunui-a-Nanaia, standing completely still by the side of that river. Have a go at being in that moment now. You don't need to add anything new."
- 18 As the students perform the action, read the extract of shared writing you have written on the board. As you continue to read the rest of the story, invite students to reflect, and to point out other moments that could be explored through the senses and through writing in the same way.

EXAMPLE 2 LADY MACBETH



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- 1 Stop as Lady Macbeth* stares at her hands following the murder of Duncan. "Let's stop here for a moment."
- 2 "When I stand up, I'm going to represent Lady Macbeth at this point in the story."
- 3 Stand up and stare at your hands, turning them over and rubbing the skin.
- 4 Relax. Discuss: "What is she up to?"
- 5 Repeat the action and speak the line of text: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?"
- 6 Relax. Discuss the line: "What do you make of that?"
- 7 Discuss the location of this event and what might be close by: "Where do you think would be a good place in the story for this to happen? Who or what might be close by?"
- 8 Ask, "What sounds do you suppose we might hear? Perhaps the drip of water from Lady Macbeth's hands, the sound of an owl hooting in the distance, the wind blowing through the window." Etc.
- 9 Ask, "Where might the light be coming from?" Students might say, "The candle beside the bowl of water, the fire burning in the fireplace, the moon outside the window." Etc.
- 10 "What about darkness? Where might there be darkness?" Students might say, "The night sky outside the castle, the shadows in the corners of the room."
- 11 "What's moving and what's still?" Students might say, "The flicking flames from burning logs in the fireplace, the air in the room, as if the castle is holding its breath."
- 12 Repeat some of the students' ideas while performing the action (this is the use of a narrator's voice): "As Lady Macbeth desperately rubbed her hands, she heard..." Etc.
- 13 Suggest, "This would make a great passage in the story, don't you think? Why not grab a piece of paper and write? Start with: 'As Lady Macbeth desperately rubbed her hands...'"
- 14 Give the students time to write, prompting them to use the aspects of dramatic imagination – sound/silence, movement/stillness, darkness/light.
- 15 Continue, stopping occasionally to ask the students to share some of their ideas.
- 16 Write some of the students' sentences on the board to create a shared passage of writing. Develop this by extending vocabulary and suggesting metaphors and other ideas.
- 17 Ask the students to put down their pens and imagine being the people in the story performing the action: "Can I ask you now to put down your pens and imagine being Lady Macbeth rubbing her hands."
- 18 As the students perform the action, read the extract of shared writing, giving them the opportunity to hear their words. Invite reflection: "I wonder if Lady Macbeth will ever be able to sleep at night?" Etc.

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DEEPENING REFLECTION

Reflection is vital for students' learning, so every time you use a key, or sequence of keys, remember to include time for students to think about, talk about, write or draw about what their learning has been. Here's a list of four strategies you can use to take critical reflection beyond a simple discussion. These strategies almost feel like keys in their own right, except they don't stand alone and don't involve moving into an imagined world. Think of them as ways of consolidating the learning. Try adding one or more of these at the end of your sequence. They add a welcome sense of ritual and seriousness, and provide evidence of students' thinking for assessment purposes.

- * **Find an essence** Invite students to come up with a six-word poem or statement that sums up their response to the context. Share the poems or statements with the group, and discuss.
- * **Mark a moment** Invite students to stand somewhere in the space where they experienced an 'aha' moment, received assistance from another student, or grappled with a tricky idea. Share the moments with the group, and discuss.
- * **Think again** Invite students to think critically with questions such as: does this sort of thing happen today / in real life? Whose perspective have we focused on, and why? Whose stories did we not hear today? And who else might have a perspective on what we've been learning – what would their views be? Invite reflection on personal learning by asking: what could we take away from our story to use in our own lives?" Invite reflection on how particular groups have been depicted during the session, particularly if this tended towards archetypes or stereotypes: what stereotypes did we play into? What did our story say about ... [insert reference here]? How does this compare with what we see in other stories and the wider world? Ask: what are you left wondering about? What questions do you have? Is there anything else we should talk about before we close?"
- * **Speak some wisdom** Invite students to gather in a circle – standing is often best as it adds to the sense of ritual. Introduce an object or artefact that represents a character from the context you've explored. Invite students to give advice to the character, speak as the character (if appropriate), or give a short reflection on what they have learned from the character. To keep things safe, make it clear that it's OK to pass. Hand the item around the circle from person to person. Close the activity with your own words. Carefully put the item away.

We would love to hear how you use this key in your teaching

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... and see how other teachers around the world have used this key

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