

Teacher Notes: Role-Plays and Simulations



Some guidelines for effective role-plays or simulations:

- The context and roles should be clearly defined, while allowing some latitude for spontaneity and creativity on the part of the students.
- The role-play should have a designated time frame established at the outset of the activity.
- The situation should be defined as a problem or controversy so that students are encouraged to take a stand or a position.
- Students should be allowed time to prepare and to access any preparatory information they need.
- The setting or context should be clearly described to help students enter into the game.
- Students should be allowed time to develop role descriptions in advance, including enough information to be able to "enter into" the character they are to portray (e.g., social and economic conditions, beliefs, and values). Verify student roles before the role-play so that the simulation includes a wide variety of perspectives among the characters. Caution students to prepare a role description without preparing a pre-determined script.
- Students may fill out a Role-Play Outline to help them prepare their characters (refer to the example that follows).
- The role-play should be structured so as to reach a conclusion or a resolution.
- Allow time for a group debriefing, including the audience, after the role-play. Students may also write individual journal reflections.
- Caution students to be realistic, and to avoid anachronisms, oversimplifications, or stereotypes.

Variations:

- Students may or may not decide to use props or costumes.
- If there are not enough roles for everyone in the group, one student could be assigned the task of being a witness or observer who "thinks out loud" to the audience without disrupting the action.
- Students could be asked to reverse roles or switch points of view in a second role-play.
- A narrator may be named to help set the scene and expand on what is happening.

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Role-Play Outline <i>List the important facts and plan how you will approach this role-play. Do not write a script as you do not know how the other characters will play out this scenario. Be creative but realistic.</i>	
When and where does this scenario take place?	Who am I?
Describe the person you will portray in this role-play (age, culture, gender, situation, residence, family situation, health).	What are the basic attitudes, beliefs, and values of this character? Summarize his or her position on the topic to be discussed.
Factual information to support the point of view of this character:	What are the main concerns of this character?
What type of solution to this question would my character like to see?	Points to remember in order to stay in character: