

AT THE PARK: Drama for EYFS/Y1
Lorraine S Harrison ©

Learning focus: safety in parks and the impact of litter on the environment.

What you need

- Images of small parks, outdoor play areas, picnics, litter bins and a duck pond or other water feature.
- A room or cleared area, large enough for children to engage in miming actions
- A scarf for an adult

Before the drama

- Use images to talk about playing in a park, including a brief reference to what a picnic entails and the need for litter bins and safety when near swings and ponds.

The drama contract

- Ask children to join you in pretending to be in a story about some children and their teacher who went for a picnic in a small park.
- Ask them to pretend that the room will be the park. Walk round the room to indicate where the park will be and specify any areas of the room that are out of bounds i.e. *'Not in our story.'*
- Using your own actions as a model, ask them to pack their imaginary bags with a packed lunch for a picnic e.g. *'Because it's pretend, you can take your favourite things to eat. I like cheese and tomato sandwiches with pickle, so that's what I'm putting in my lunch box for the picnic.'* If you have a small class you may want to ask them what they have chosen. Alternatively you can ask them to whisper what they have chosen to a partner.
- Then suggest they add something to play with to their bags. Include a small ball, then add a skipping rope and maybe another such as a small bat if you wish. Explain that there is only a small piece of grass to play on.

Dramatic play

- Remind them that they are pretending the room is the park and begin the story with the words, *'This is a story about some children and their teacher from x school, who went for a picnic in a park.'*
- From now on it is important that you talk as if you are actually at the park. If you have to stop the drama for any reason, tell the children you are stopping the story before you come out of role. You can then restart when ready.
- Ask the children to join you as you sit on the grass. Remark on how small the area is and how they need to stay on the grass to play.
- Suggest they play with the ball first. Demonstrate how to throw and catch the ball safely by miming the action yourself and then ask the children if they can do the same. If the children are lively, suggest that they throw it gently and or bounce but not kicking for fear of losing the ball or injuring someone.
- Begin to play with your ball to demonstrate and then suggest they can throw a ball to each other if they wish. Stop when you notice the children's attention waning. If only one or two child are struggling, ask them to play catch with you to give others time to play.
- Repeat the above with any other items such as bats or skipping ropes. Then sit down and let them eat their picnic. Start by miming this yourself as a model each time. Chat about what everyone has in their picnic. Keep this brief and not in real time.
- Ask if anyone has noticed any bins for the rubbish from their picnic. If children say yes, then ask everyone to put their rubbish in the imaginary bins. If not, produce an imaginary bag and go round collecting the rubbish to take home.

The events: (+ Teacher-in-role)

- Inform the children you are stopping the story to tell them what happened next.
- Explain that a friend of the teacher's was walking in the park and came to talk to them. Give that person a name and ask if they can pretend that you are that person when you are wearing a scarf. Make it clear that you will only be that person when wearing the scarf.
- Put on the scarf and in role as this person, ask them what they have been doing in the park so far. Ask them what they did with their rubbish after the picnic and thank them for putting their rubbish in the

bins or the bag. Tell them that you walk in this park every day and see people leaving rubbish around the park and the swings and even in the duck pond. Explain how that spoils it for you. Mention the dangers for animals and other negative aspects of rubbish if appropriate. Then bid them goodbye as you walk away.

- Turn your back and take off the scarf. Immediately indicate you are going back into story mode by telling the children that the teacher's friend went away feeling very pleased with the children.
- Now talk as if you are back in the story and remark on the swings nearby.
- Making sure you stay in role, describe the swings you can see and demonstrate how to play on the swings safely. Do this in mime by running backwards and forwards as if swinging with small steps. Warn them about swinging too high and tell them to play carefully on the swings. Then do the same with whatever else you have seen in the park, before letting them play themselves. You may not need to demonstrate the mime for the other things, as children usually understand what is required by now. Stop when you notice children are losing interest.
- Then stand everyone in a circle around an imaginary duck pond. Describe the ducks and talk about how to keep safe near water.
- Collect the children together and tell them it is time to leave the park.

Reflection

- Sit the children at the side of the room and announce that the story of the visit to the park is now at an end.
- Ask them if they enjoyed their time at the park.
- Reflect on the experience by asking which parts they liked best. Reflect and talk about the person's comments about the litter problems and what they remember about safety near water.
- Write/draw and/or talk about the visit, linking it to real parks, safety and litter bins.