

Drama Workshop about the Global Trade of Cotton Pro Ethical Trade Finland, Eettisen kaupan puolesta ry

The Structure of the Workshop

Presentation of the workshop (10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and Pro Ethical Trade.

The theme of the workshop is the production of cotton and the inequality of global trade. What is cotton? Where does it come from?

Introduction to the workshop; show three pictures: t-shirt, the Aral Sea and WTO subsidies; see Prezi.

Let's start studying this topic in a drama workshop. We will focus on six characters, who are fictional but based on real life. See their descriptions at the end.

Drama characters and Take a step exercise (20 minutes)

Give everyone a card containing information about a role / character related to cotton trade. Give them a moment to read the information and to imagine the character. There are six different characters (see in the end of this document).

Ask the people in the group to think about three things regarding their character.

1. Where do you live?
2. How is your family and your friends?
3. How do you spend your days?

Everything about the character is not told, the rest one has to imagine. The characters are based on real people. Read out loud different statements. Every time your character would say 'yes' take a step forward.

1. You have a comfortable home with a television and a computer.
2. You can study and choose a career that interests you.
3. You have access to internet and it is useful to you.
4. Your life is meaningful and the future looks bright.
5. Financially your life has always been balanced and effortless.
6. You can affect the society around you.
7. You are not afraid of the police stopping you on the street.
8. You can invite your friends to your home for dinner.
9. If you get into trouble or there is a problem in your life, you know who to turn to.
10. You feel like you are valued and respected in the community that you live in.

When all the statements have been read, the participants are asked to look around them and to pay attention to how much they have moved. The exercise will be deconstructed through discussion.

In the end go through the characters and go into groups with other people with the same characters.

Still photograph (20 minutes)

Discuss for the moment the character in the group. Based on what they know or imagine about the character, they will build a still photograph or a statue about what could be their character's worst fear and their biggest dream. The photographs will be presented one group at a time, first the threat and then the dream. At first the audience will guess what it is about. After this the group will reveal what the situation is about. Reserve a little time to discuss the characters and their role in the production of cotton.

Statements (20 minutes)

Continue with the same groups. Tell that all characters will meet each other in a meeting where the global trade in cotton will be discussed. The groups will discuss and write down statements / titles for their characters about something that they would like to bring up in the meeting. If it is difficult for them to think about a title, you can advise them to make use of the threats and dreams of the characters. All six groups will present their statements one by one in order to improve the global trade in cotton.

The leader and other participants pose additional questions to the group. In other words, interview each character at a time.

Additional task:

a) come up with conclusions b) choose two characters to debate about an issue c) vote about some issue as the characters.

Forming pairs (5 minutes)

Shake off the roles and move in space. Form groups of different sizes according to the leader's instructions. For example: form a group of three, form a group with people who have a shirt of the same colour as you. Eventually form pairs.

Own thoughts to the wall (10-15 minutes)

Discuss in pairs about the workshop and global trade in cotton. Forget about the roles and think about this as yourselves. Gather from each pair one thought about what could be done to change the situation. The pairs can make two separate notes if they cannot agree.

Gather all the pieces of paper to a wall and go through them together.

Finish (5 minutes)

Noting the moment or what stays in mind in one word.

Gather experiences, think about what you learned together and finish the workshop. All participants are asked to think about the moment when during the workshop, according to them, something meaningful happened and go to the exact place and the exact posture. About some choices you can discuss and the participants can be encouraged to tell why that specific moment was significant.

Or: Sit in a circle and everyone says in one word what stayed in their minds about the workshop.

Exercises of the workshop

Take a step

The leader will tell the group different statements. If the answer is yes, one takes a step forward. The members of the group will either be their characters or themselves in this exercise depending on the instructions.

Still photograph

The group or some of its members form a still photograph that the others look at and interpret by concentrating on a certain concrete moment or the physical expression of an abstract concept. The still photograph can be used as a part of a drama exercise as, for example, a photograph someone found, a painting or a statue. This is a very multifunctional technique and it can also be used as an independent exercise.

Statements/titles

A phrase, a thought, a statement or a graffiti is written on a large piece of paper and it will be shown to the group in the middle of an improvised exercise. The physical exercise and the written text can mirror each other.

Meeting

When the space has been organised together and the participants know how to act in roles, you can give more information, handle problems, and clarify and build the characters.

Groups in a role

Two or more people stand facing each other and the others queue behind them. The groups whisper to their "representative" what they should tell the others. The person is the voice of the group. The technique allows everyone to shape the development of the conversation.

Considering the moment

All participants are asked to think about the moment when during the workshop, according to them, something meaningful happened and go to the exact place and the exact posture. About some choices you can discuss and the participants can be encouraged to tell why that specific moment was significant. This is a useful way to reflect the working session or to gather thoughts for the next session when the work with drama continues.

Playing to warm up

Shaking the hands of everyone

The participants walk in space and go and shake the hands of everyone in the group one by one. Eventually everyone will have shaken everyone else's hands.

Walking in the space

The whole group walks in space according to the instructions given by the leader. The space can be filled as tightly as possible when the participants come as close to each other as possible or conversely as loosely as possible. The walking can be slow or fast or the speed can be determined on a scale from one to five. The leader can also determine what the walking surface is like, whether it is hot, cold, sharp, prickly, soft, slippery, etc.

Name and posture

Tell your own name and take a posture. The rest of the group will repeat the name and copy the posture. Go through everyone in a circle one by one. The exercise can also be organised in a way that instead of a posture, everyone chooses a movement or a sound.

YES game

In the game everyone can suggest something to do, such as “let's be birds” or “let's be robots.” The rest of the participants accept the suggestion by shouting together “yes” and start doing the suggested thing.

Shaking

Shake first the right arm eight times and count out loud, then the left arm eight times, the right leg eight times, and then the left leg eight times. Continue in the same way by halving the number of shakes; first eight, then four, two and eventually one shake. The game can vary according to what you want.

Presenting your pair

Talk with your pair for five minutes. Present your pair to the rest of the group. Tell your pairs' names and three things about them.

The roles / characters of the drama workshop

Francois Kafanda

- 56-year-old cotton farmer from Burkina Faso, a man
- you have finished basic school and secondary school
- you have supported your family by harvesting cotton since you were 16 years old, ever since your father fell ill with river blindness
- you have got by quite well by farming cotton but over the last fifteen years your income has decreased drastically after the collapse in the price of cotton

Suhrob Ismailov

- 34-year-old human rights activist from Uzbekistan, a man
- you have studied to become a lawyer
- you take photographs of children in the cotton fields and publish reports of human rights problems in Uzbekistan
- the police harrasses you because of your activism
- you have 2- and 4-year-old children

Narmad Gunti

- 71-year-old Indian owner of a cotton factory, a man
- there are 250 people working in your factory who earn a small salary; there they clean and dye cotton
- you live with your wife in a pleasant neighbourhood
- your daughter's daughter studies in the United States and you pay for her studies

Niina Nieminen

- Finnish 27-year-old salesperson in a clothes shop, a woman
- you work in a cheap fashion chain's shop 7,5 hours a day
- you earn a decent living with your salary and you can buy as many clothes as you want
- in the summer you're planning on spending a two-week holiday in India

John McCotton

- 49-year-old cotton farmer from the USA, a man
- you have a big cotton farm in Mississippi
- despite the annual \$132 000 agricultural subsidy the future of your livelihood looks bleak
- you have learned cotton farming by doing it

Fong Mei

- Chinese 16-year-old sewer, a girl
- you sew clothes in a big factory
- you get the minimum wage
- you try to send some money to your family in the countryside every month
- you share a room with two other sewer girls in the factory dormitory