

Dramatic Storytelling Workshop

Sample Structure – March 2026 NMcG

Objectives:

To make group members aware of all the storytelling tools they already possess and to teach them some of the tools that writers and improvisers use to create new stories on the spot.

Through comedy, games and improvisations, the aim is to encourage everyone to tell their own stories. The workshops are designed to give them confidence, allow them to access their own creativity, write immediately in the way they speak and help them perform their own stories as part of groups or individually.

Workshop Overview:

Warm-up Games – I get everyone who wants to take part to sit or stand in a circle. If a game isn't readily adopted, I just move on to the next one.

Voice Copy – where I ask everyone to copy the silly sounds I make to warm up their voices.

Name Ball – where we throw a ball around calling out the name of the person the ball's thrown to, the pace going faster & faster until the ball's dropped. (It wakes everyone up and also helps me get to know their names.)

Name Check – one player in the middle of the circle. Her task is to say the name of any player in the room three times before they have a chance to say it once. If she succeeds, they replace her. If she fails, she has to try it with another name.

Pass the Scrunch Face – I ask the group to gurn their faces into comic poses that are then 'passed on' to the person beside them, who changes it to another comic expression and passes it to the next person. Good for getting rid of any self-consciousness.

High Hanging Fruit is designed to loosen up the limbs, as everyone tries to grasp a pear or apple hanging just beyond their stretched fingertips.

The workshop starts with **Insta-Stories** going around a circle, with each person supplying one line at a time to tell us 'what happened next'. I give them the first line and next lines if they get stuck. This is an easy introductory game that's low focus – i.e. they all have to work hard but the group focus is only on them briefly and helps ease them into performing for their peers.

I sat down under an oak tree in a clearing in the middle of dense woods. Then I heard a growl...

Next come the **STIMPROV** team improvisations. I split them into small groups of three to four. I show each team a picture of a location or a person, a strange prop they pick at random from a bag and tell them a line of dialogue. They take three minutes to spitball an idea and then perform it whether they're ready or not, so they've had time for a basic blueprint but then must make it up on the spot going in whichever direction each member chooses. With the three different areas of stimuli along with the shared load, this immediately shows just how arbitrary or random story ideas can be and nonetheless how effectively they can work.

Selling Two players – one is the seller / street trader, one the assistant. They select a prop and sell it to an audience member who haggles for a good deal. The seller has to be persuasive about the qualities and value of the item. (The prop doesn't have to be what it is – it is whatever the seller says it is.)

True Story This time I want a 'true story' from everyone in the group – it can be as short as you like. Then we vote on whether you're telling the truth or not.

Fun Individual Stories When is the last time you had fun unexpectedly? When you didn't expect to have fun?

A very useful storytelling technique is **Whose Story is True?** I split the class into twos and have one privately tell the other a short true story that the listener has to retain and make their own.

The group then hears the story from both speakers and has to decide who's telling the truth. It shows how much creativity goes into animating both versions. It dawns on people at around this point that they are engaged in storytelling for most of their social interactions, all day long.

Role-Play 1: Grumpy a friend of yours is depressed and has trouble getting out of bed – what things do you suggest he does to make herself feel better? Could you suggest she lets her friend give her a haircut? Do you suggest you both go for a walk to get some fresh air? Do you watch a film together? Do you tell her a story of how you dug yourself out of the pit? Do you tell her about your own everyday habits to keep your mood up?

Next is **Power Play** where I demonstrate the dynamics of high status versus low status power relations in every scene.

Every scene must 'turn' – in a two-character scene, both of their statuses should change.

Power Play 1

GP or Nurse vs. Service user. Negative & positive versions.

Power Play 2

Key worker vs. 6-month resident. Negative and Positive.

Power Play 3

Garda vs. Person in need. Cold judgmental, then decent.

Power Play 4

Garda doing a stop & search

Power Play 5

Shop Security Guard falsely / correctly accuses someone of shoplifting.

Suggestions & volunteers to play when they felt powerless and then, empowered or powerful. What changed? What gave them the confidence?

We improvise power scenes like, a boss firing a worker, an awkward debt collection between friends or a bike vs. car collision with no one seemingly to blame.

Angry Neighbour is a two-person game where all the online deliveries, post and takeaways keep getting sent to the wrong flat, driving the person mad having to carry them round to the right address until she just stops bothering. The person missing the deliveries has to call over and ask for them back, trying not to escalate it to a full-blown row.

Next door Neighbour is the head of the resident's association and has complaints about noise, dealers coming to and from the house, fights, violence, partying noise & loud music.

I gradually increase the level of focus and the complexity of the games.

All of these games force the players to think on their feet, be instantly creative and make up narratives. It is also great fun and naturally brings in a lot of comedy, especially when we play the scenes a second time, switching the power dynamic.

Two Rush In

Two players rush into the circle and start describing an extraordinary event that's just happened them on their way over. They tell the story between them without any discussion.

Individual Spooky Stories

Have you ever had an uncanny thing happen to you / an encounter with the supernatural?

We'll work on free association games too, like **Shared Dream** where we all lay back on our seats / on the floor and close our eyes and one by one, answer a volunteer dream leader's

questions as to where we imagine themselves to be and what we're doing. Basically, it's an agreement across the room to 'dream the same dream.' One reason I play this game is to remind them to always be alert for story or business ideas, to have a notebook beside their beds, as frequently some of our best thinking happens when we're either falling asleep or waking up.

It is a conscious decision to utilise the two forms – improvising a scene in the moment and relating a story verbally. It varies the skills they're using and refreshes minds as we go.

Group discussion – what they enjoyed most about the workshop, what didn't grab their attention as much. What they're looking forward to over this week and then the weekend.