

About ADEI

The Association of Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI) is a voluntary professional organisation with a committee composed of people whose educational specialisation and expertise is in Educational Drama, and between us we teach at all levels - primary, secondary and third level. Our aim is to promote Drama in the classroom as an art form and as a creative, interactive way of teaching across the curriculum. We aim to support teachers working both in and through drama.

Background information for the teacher

The drama is broken up into several 'episodes' which may take between 3 and 5 lessons, depending on the children's ability, previous drama experience and time available. The drama is aimed at 4th, 5th and 6th classes.

These lessons are based on the true story of a young Irish woman called Margaret Devaney. The Sligo woman was on her way to New York on board the Titanic with friends Mary and Kate to make a better life for herself. *[Teachers may decide to change the three principal character's names where appropriate e.g. Liam, Michael and Eoin.]* The lifeboat Margaret found herself on that fateful night had become entangled in the Titanic's rivets as it was being lowered. It was in danger of going down with the ship. A crew member desperately asked if any passenger on the lifeboat had something sharp to cut the ropes. Margaret produced a penknife that was used to cut the ropes and allow the lifeboat to get away. The penknife had been a parting gift from her 12 year old brother.

When Margaret was on board the Carpathia (the ship that picked up the survivors) the man who had been in charge of the lifeboat approached Margaret. He gave her an iron emblem flag that he had removed from a lifeboat. He told her that she was responsible for the lifeboat escaping the Titanic by having the knife. As a token of his appreciation, he presented her with the iron flag.

Resources

The resources used in these lessons are available on the ADEI website www.adei.ie and include:

- Images of both the Titanic and the Carpathia
- A letter from Margaret's mother
- A picture of an iron emblem flag from the lifeboat
- Margaret's ticket
- Briefing cards
- Relevant resource sheets

In addition, you will need:

- A role of masking tape
- 30 small sheets of brown sugar paper
- 6 small sheets of red sugar paper

Before you begin it may be useful for the children to have some knowledge of what life was like on board the Titanic, particularly for steerage (third class) passengers. This background information will come in use as you progress through the drama. For worksheets on this and ideas on how to do it in role – see www.adei.ie

PART ONE – GETTING TO KNOW MARGARET

1. Setting the Scene

The children look at images of the Titanic and the teacher elicits any previous related knowledge.

2. Preparing to Meet Margaret

- Teacher displays image number 3 (www.adei.ie) and explains that this is a picture of the Carpathia – the ship onto which survivors were moved following the sinking of the Titanic.
- The teacher says that there is a woman in the background whom we cannot see. She is alone. The teacher invites them to think of questions that they would ask her if they able to meet her.
- These questions may be recorded.

3. Meeting Margaret on board the Carpathia – Teacher-in-role

- With the students seated in a circle, the teacher takes on the role of Margaret using a scarf/coat. The teacher should have the letter, ticket and iron emblem flag to hand. Margaret looks anxious and worried. She is holding the iron emblem flag in her hand. This silent scene continues merely for a moment before she sighs, takes a seat and begins to engage with the children. Margaret says that she is just after boarding the Carpathia having had a lucky escape from the Titanic. She is still in a little shock and is looking around (above the children’s heads) for someone. If the children ask what she is looking for she can reveal that she is looking for her friends, Mary and Kate.
- Children ask the teacher the questions that have been prepared and others that occur to them as they hear her responses.
- The following information is revealed in response to their questions:
 - *She boarded the ship at Queenstown, Co. Cork with friends Mary and Kate. She hasn’t seen them since she got on the Carpathia. The last time she saw them was on the Titanic as they scrambled for lifeboats.*
 - *She decided to travel to America with the hope of getting a job as a housemaid for a well-to-do family.*
 - *Her sisters and brother live there and had often written telling of the better life they have.*
 - *One brother still lives at home – Seamus (12 years old).*
 - *The only possessions she has on her are a letter, an iron emblem flag and her ticket.*
 - *Letter is from her mother (can be read aloud).*
 - *Iron emblem flag was given to her by a crew member (the reasons for this are not to be revealed at this stage- perhaps teacher in role as Margaret doesn’t want to talk about it at this time- more concerned with finding friends).*

4. Reflection

- Teacher comes out of role and the children look at the letter in more detail and each group identifies three new pieces of information about Margaret from the letter.

5. Role on the wall

- An outline of the character is drawn on a large piece of paper and the children record what they know about Margaret to date.

6. The day before Margaret boards the Titanic – Small group still images

The class is split into 5 groups. Each group depicts one of the following moments from the days before she boarded the Titanic (10th and 11th April 1912):

- Margaret's last meal with her family.
- Her brother giving her a present.
- Saying goodbye to her family at the train station in Sligo.
- People in Queenstown seeing the Titanic for the first time having heard so much about it.
- Margaret with her friends Mary and Kate waving goodbye to her father from the ferry that transported passengers from the harbour to the ship.

These images may be performed through *Performance Carousel*. The groups, positioned in a circular manner around the room, will in turn move silently into their image. They hold it for 5 seconds and then melt to the ground. The next group moves seamlessly into creating their image and so on until every group has had a turn. The sequence of these images should flow without interruption, like a wave. Music can add to the atmosphere. Suggested music on www.adei.ie

After the performance carousel, ask the children what they thought of that activity and if anyone had a comment to make on how they felt.

PART TWO – ONBOARD THE TITANIC

1. Inside Margaret's cabin

- The teacher uses masking tape to mark the outline of the cabin that Margaret shared with Mary and Kate on the classroom floor.
- The children suggest pieces of furniture that would be in the cabin e.g. beds and a wash hand basin. These along with other items that the children suggest and which are appropriate to the time and context can be created using the masking tape.
- Items that cannot be created using masking tape are created by drawing on the small pieces of brown sugar paper e.g. a port hole / piece of luggage can be drawn on the paper and placed by the child into the cabin.
- Slowly, the space is created in this way. It is important that the children feel a sense of ownership over this part of the drama.
- The children are then asked to suggest which bed belongs to Margaret and this area becomes the focus of the next section.

2. Margaret's special items

- The teacher initiates a class discussion about items that Margaret may have packed that were important to her e.g. a photograph of her family; a letter written by her mother; a gift from her younger brother.
- Then, the children are organised in small groups. They are given one piece of red sugar paper per group. They discuss what items of significance Margaret may have had and where in the cabin she may have kept them e.g. a photograph of her family underneath her pillow.
- These items are drawn on the red sugar paper and then added to the 'cabin'. One child from each group approaches the cabin naming the item of significance and stating where it is kept e.g. "here is a gold bracelet given to her by her mother, Margaret keeps this in her suitcase".

3. Exploring the cabin through the senses

- The children explore the cabin using their senses – What can be seen in the cabin? What can be seen from the porthole and from the cabin door? What can be heard from inside the cabin? What does the cabin smell like?
- The teacher can model this initially e.g. "I can hear other people talking and laughing in the cabin next door. I can hear footsteps above me and the distant sound of classical music from the first class deck".
- The children are then invited to step into the cabin – one at a time. Some children step in and say one of the following:
 - I can see...
 - I can smell...
 - I can hear...

4. Margaret's dreams

- The children are told that they are now going to explore the first night that Margaret spent in that cabin. They are going to create the dreams that Margaret had that night. Children can speculate as to what Margaret dreamed about. (You may need to emphasise that these are dreams not nightmares)
- In groups of 5-6, the children create **two** separate still images:
 - Image one = life at home.
 - Image two = life in America.
- The teacher discusses with the class how time is often mixed up in dreams and so the children create a '**dream sequence**' using these two images. The teacher explains that each group will move silently into their first still image, hold it still, then move into image 2, holding it still, then back to image 1, hold it still, finishing with image 2. Their movements between the images should be exaggerated and in slow motion. These groups 'perform' the dream sequence simultaneously at first, and then as a performance carousel so they can watch one another's work.
- Music can be played in the background and the children are encouraged to use the tempo of the piece to guide their movement (see www.adei.ie for suggested pieces of music).

5. Reflection through diary entry

- Next, the children imagine that Margaret has woken and not being able to go back to sleep, she begins to write in her diary.
- The children write the diary entry in role as Margaret on her first night on the Titanic.
- The same music can be played here as the children write.
- Afterwards, some children might like to share their work.

PART THREE - THE COLLISION

1. The Collision – Narration and Still Images.

- This section begins by the teacher narrating the following piece:
The three girls made friends with the fourth passenger in the cabin and they spent many days together talking about their future lives in America and about their families back home. They spent time on deck; enjoyed meals together and relaxed in the general room chatting and enjoying music. April 14th was a day like the others but at approximately 11: 40 p.m., the fate of the Titanic changed. We will now explore what happened in different parts of the ship when Titanic collided with an iceberg.
- Children are arranged into 5 groups and are given one of the following scenes to depict (see www.adei.ie for resource sheet):
 - Family taking a late night stroll on the first class deck.
 - The officers in the bridge.
 - Men in the third class smoking room.
 - A family in their second class cabin.
 - The musicians playing on the first class deck.
- Each group must create three still images of their scene:
 - The first impact of the collision
 - The worst impact of the collision
 - The ship starts to go down
- The children share their images with the class.

2. The Lifeboat – Defining the space & small group improvisation

- The children are in groups of five/six and take the following roles:
 - A crew member in lifeboat.
 - Two crew members on deck – lowering the lifeboat.
 - Margaret.
 - Other passengers.
- The teacher explains that before they take on these roles, they need to create the lifeboat using classroom chairs. They decide also how best to depict the deck above. As this is taking place, the teacher calls all the Margaret characters together and gives them the following information (brief): *As the lifeboat is being lowered, it gets into difficulty. It takes you a minute or two to remember that your brother's present to you, a penknife, is in your inside pocket.*
- The teacher calls all the crew members on deck together and gives them this brief: *As the lifeboat is being lowered, the ropes get caught on the ship's rivets. It is impossible to get it free. Ask the passengers on the lifeboat if anyone has something sharp with which to cut the ropes.*
- Ask the children before the improvisation begins: *What would the mood have been like as people were scrambling into lifeboats? What kind of voices do you think people would have used?*

- The children then improvise the scene. The children can share their improvisations with one another. Talk about them afterwards. Ask the children to say one thing that they liked about each improvisation. Make the link between the gift that Margaret received from her brother and the penknife that was used to cut the ropes free.
- Note: The nature of improvisation is such that some scenes may not depict the story true to its original form. Should this be the case, the teacher can draw the children's attention to the possible alternative outcomes but because this is a historical event, the teacher can direct the children's attention to what actually happened. For example, were a group to depict the lifeboat not being released, the teacher might say "it is interesting to see what might have happened as shown by this group but in this story, Margaret did actually use the penknife to free the ropes".

3. Back to Margaret on the Carpathia – Children-in -role, teacher-in-role, thought tracking

- Teacher narrates: *Margaret and the other survivors watched from their lifeboats in utter despair as the unsinkable Titanic went down before their very eyes. It was a couple of hours before the help arrived. All the survivors were transferred onto the Carpathia and the ship set off towards New York.*
- Children stand in a circle on the edge of the working space. Explain that **nobody** on board the Carpathia had seen Margaret's friends Kate and Mary. Each of them is to enter the space and make a still image of somebody (other than Margaret) on board the Carpathia (this may be done simultaneously or one child at a time).
- Once everyone is in position, the teacher touches each person in turn on the shoulder to hear their thoughts. One sentence of dialogue per person.
- The scene comes to life, TIR (wearing the scarf/coat) as Margaret walks around the group with despair asking *have you seen my friends Mary and Kate?* (Describes their appearance). After a while, having no success, she sits on a chair and holds still. The teacher comes out of role, and places the scarf on the chair. This signifies Margaret. The children come out of role. They write one word/sentence that represents how Margaret is feeling at this moment. One by one they call aloud their word/sentence and place it around where she is seated. Thoughts that are uppermost in her mind are placed close to the chair whilst distant thoughts can be placed further away. This is done slowly and with feeling. The session should end here.
- You may like to discuss the children's experiences of this activity with them when it finishes.

In the concluding part of this drama, we meet Margaret some time later and the children discover the origin of the flag as well as Mary and Kate's fate. This is available by logging onto www.adei.ie