

### II.3.1 *LOST*

This drama lesson is based on the story of Homer's *Odyssey*, but rather than studying the text and engaging in transforming that into a performance, we are offering an example of using the story as a frame for joint creation and the dramatization of human experience. The teacher might choose to share specific stories from the eventful, 10-years-long homecoming journey of Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, but this is not necessary for the realisation of this drama lesson. At the centre of this structure is the concept of being lost, and the possible tools used to overcome this feeling / situation. We believe that this is a basic human sentiment shared by children / young people whatever background or situation they are from, and exploring it through the fiction of a story that is being built together will allow students to make connections for themselves or share experience with each other.

“Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns ...  
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered  
the hallowed heights of Troy.  
Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,  
many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,  
fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.”<sup>3</sup>

<p><b>Centre/focus of the drama lesson:</b></p> <p><i>Being lost, and its impact on people.</i></p> <p><i>What resources can be used to find a way out?</i></p>	<p>Being lost – as the concept can be investigated both on a literal level (in a situation / place), and also on a metaphorical level (feeling lost / being without a purpose in life, etc.). It allows participants to bring in a variety of experience and examine issues that interest them.</p>
<p><b>Age-group:</b> primarily 9-12-years-olds</p>	<p>We provide a framework that can be adapted to different age-groups – possible ways of doing this are part of the comments below.</p>
<p><b>Timing:</b> 45-60 minutes</p>	<p>The basic lesson plan can be completed in this timeframe, but it is always more fruitful to allow more time for it.</p> <p>The lesson can be easily extended into a series of lessons.</p>

<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>THE THINKING BEHIND THEM</b>
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**Narration** – the teacher explains that today’s lesson will be about creating a new episode of a very old story. The story is about a hero from the Greek mythology and his journey home, which became quite eventful. He wandered around the seas for 10 years before he got home from Troy to Ithaca. “We will invent one episode of this journey, which is about how he was lost and found his way.”

**Contracting** – It is useful to clarify what the lesson demands of the students. For example:

“To be able to work together we will need to listen to each other’s ideas and build upon them.”

“There won’t be any right or wrong answers, because we will be talking about ideas. The more ideas you share with each other the more interesting our story can become.”

It might be useful to come back to the content of the story to re-focus the group. You can place the central theme of this lesson to your students, saying “we will be looking at how even the strongest, toughest people can be lost sometimes and what might help them find their direction again.”

It is important to clarify both the content and the mode of the work for the students. You will have a clear idea how much or which part of the Odyssey might raise the interest of your group. Would the wooden horse of Troy be interesting for them? Or some of the cunning tricks of Odysseus – like how he tricked Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant Cyclopes? You are trying to your students engaged in the story and offering a fictional context.

It is important that the students have an understanding of what is expected of them and what their constraints/liberties are in a lesson. We call this ‘contracting’ in drama.

It is useful to think about how you can sign in your language / tone, and also in your body language that you are changing from your usual ‘teacher’ role to a partnership with the students in which you are ‘facilitating’ them in building and thinking about a story collectively.

Showing the statue – the facilitator sets the context by explaining that “after 9 years of adventures and challenges, after a night of terrible shipwrecking storms on the seas, once again Odysseus found himself alone on the shores of an unknown island. I will show you what he looked like that morning when he realised his situation”. Following this the facilitator shows herself/himself as the **statue** of Odysseus.

Ask the participants to ‘read’ the statue

and open a discussion about what they see in the statue. You can help the discussion by asking open questions about what the statue expresses for them or what sort of questions does it raise (if your questions start with how, where or why then you are probably in the right territory). Remember you are talking about the statue at the moment, not so much about the person – you will be doing that after the next step.

It is useful for you to make an input in the beginning of the lesson, because it provides a model of engagement and it also liberates the participants – it is ok to move out of the usual classroom way of working.

You are also providing a focus point – something to stare at – for the students, and also something specific to talk about and then modify in the next step.

Creating the statue is a creative task for the facilitator, we suggest that you think it through and ‘rehearse’ it beforehand – remember, everything you do (the direction you look, the way your hands are clenched or loose, if you sit or stand) will be read for meaning by the participants!

Modifying the statue of Odysseus – the facilitator can state that she/he is not very satisfied with this statue and would like to ask the participants to help in making it better.

How could it express 'being lost' better?

Try to make the discussion into a practical exploration. Ask participants to show their ideas, for them to step into the 'role' of Odysseus.

It is not so important to agree on the best solutions, but it is really useful to try to talk both about what 'being lost' means, and how body language, position and facial expressions sign different feelings and thoughts.

This section is really useful in changing set classroom dynamics – it is the 'teacher' who needs help and the 'students' who can 'know better'. This can be quite empowering for the students and this will be really useful for the rest of the lesson. Do not worry, you will not lose your authority – but this gesture will make you more genuine and human. It is also important to take the suggestion and thoughts of participants seriously, learn through trying things out.

**Thought tracking** – exploring thoughts and feelings. Till this point you were working on a statue, but now you will be looking at the person represented by the statue.

Ask the participants to work in **pairs or threes** and for them to think about the thoughts that could be crossing his Odysseus' mind in this moment. Ask the participants to write these thoughts down in first person (eg. "What have I done wrong again?").

**Sharing:** After a few minutes you can ask the participants to come back and share their work. Depending on the group this can be done by just simply reading out what they have written, or you can set up the statue again and ask them to read it out as if these thoughts were just crossing Odysseus's mind. Ask them to leave some time for you to bring the statue to life and react to the thought in some way.

The structure is moving gradually towards moving into the situation and more active tasks for the participants.

Reacting from the role to the thoughts written by the participants offers some purpose for their work, and again takes the attention off them. It is best if you keep your reactions minimal and non-verbal (or if you talk, you could just repeat what is read out by the participants), your function here is to make them more tangible, and not to judge them.

Group work - Creating a **depiction** (you can read in detail about the differences between still image, depiction and statue below) of what Odysseus is wishing for the most in this moment.

After a short discussion reflecting again on Odysseus's situation and story you can ask the participants what this man might be wishing for. It might be useful to share a few ideas (remember, this is fiction, it is in a mythical world and wishes are not reality!) and then split the participants up into groups and ask them to choose one and create a depiction – an image like painting – that shows the wish that is inside Odysseus.

After giving the group a clear time frame to create these images and checking on how the work is going (you can check if any group needs your support in coming to decisions), you can ask the groups to share their depictions.

You have been looking at his current situation till now, but in this task, you are moving towards exploring what his wishes are.

Finding the best way of sharing the work between groups is always a challenge for the facilitator. Make sure that there is a little reflection – preferably from the other participants – about each image, but also that the work doesn't get drowned in long discussions.

<p><b>Narrating the story</b> – The facilitator develops the story further by explaining that “as Odysseus was sitting on the seashore, he began hearing distant voices from the thick forest behind him. He looked at the forest but could not see any people there, so he moved closer. The voices were becoming stronger and stronger. It was as if he could hear the things he wished for the most from within the forest.”</p>	<p>A drama lesson structure builds on gives the facilitator provides and the sections that are left open for the participants to fill with content.</p> <p>This section moves the story further in order to create more opportunities for the participants to think further.</p>
<p><i>Possible extra task</i> - creating a <b>soundscape</b> of wishes.</p> <p>Depending on the time you have on your hand and the interest of the group you could create a soundscape of wishes – the sounds Odysseus hears from the forest.</p> <p>The facilitator would need to work like a conductor in this case and the groups might work on transforming their depictions into words and sentences.</p>	<p>This task offers the possibility to engage with another dimension of the artform of theatre.</p> <p>Some groups might be more open to this type of sound work, while others might be less interested.</p> <p>The structure works without this task as well, so implement it only if you think it offers more to the group.</p>

<p><b>Whole group discussion:</b> this is the part when the group creates the story. What the facilitator states to structure this discussion is three ‘givens’ – that Odysseus meets some form of an ‘enemy’, overcomes it and finds his way back on track towards Ithaca. It is useful if you try to agree with the group on these one by one.</p> <p>In some cases, you might get too many ideas and it might be difficult for the group to agree. In this case it might be the best idea to split the group up according to the three/four ideas they find the most interesting and for them to create different variations to the end of the story.</p>	<p>This section looks at the narrative, the content. Stories work on a metaphorical level, so do not get worried if the group starts to come up with “wild” ideas, these can easily be part of a creative process.</p>
<p>Group work – creating a <b>still image</b>.</p> <p>In case you have agreed with the group on the ending of the story the three groups can work on three elements of the story. One can portray the enemy, the other the way it is fought and the third can show the way Odysseus find his way back.</p> <p>In case the groups are working on three different versions they will be creating three images each. In this case they will need more time.</p>	<p>This section is looking at the form of how the content agreed above is portrayed. Ideally the groups are going to pay more attention to HOW they show the narrative. It is the facilitators task to remind them of this aspect of their task.</p>

<p><b>Sharing the moments:</b> Depending on which version the group has gone with the facilitator either needs to connect the three images into one story or set up for the ‘audience’ (the other participants) to see three different versions.</p> <p>It is useful to offer something specific to watch for the participants in this process. E.g. What are the most powerful elements in an image? Which image/part of an image surprised you the most? The participants should not be evaluating each other’s work but helped in watching them carefully.</p>	<p>This section connects the work done in different groups. It provides a sense of community as well as of achievement.</p> <p>Participants are ‘Performers’ and ‘Audience’ to their own work at the same time.</p>
<p><b>Mapping thoughts</b> – reflection on the story</p> <p>The participants here reflect on the story they actively took part in creating. This discussion should be centred around the question “what were the elements (inner and outer) that helped Odysseus overcome his being lost?”</p> <p>In case the discussion develops into directions that interest the participants more, that is not a problem.</p> <p>It can be useful if you note the participants thoughts down (just an important word from each) on a sugar paper, or the blackboard.</p>	<p>It is useful to create space to reflect on the story just created. Participants may want to reflect on the process as well, that is very useful.</p> <p>The facilitator might have reflections as well and in a partnership it is fair if he/ she places these as well (for example: it seemed to me that agreeing on the story was really difficult for us, how did you feel about that part?) Make sure that your reflections are not heard as a teacher telling off students!</p>

**Reflective task – re-placing the statue**

Return to the statue of the lost Odysseus that you created and then the participants developed. Remind the group of this statue and ask them “if you could place this statue anywhere in the town, the country or even the world, for people to see, where would you place it?”

The facilitator can probe the responses further asking why the participants suggest a specific place, what would the statue remind people of who see it.

The purpose of this task is to make connections between the fiction of the drama and the actual world the participants live in.

This can happen by just asking the question, it will possibly be really interesting for the facilitator to see what the thoughts of the participants are on this.