

DEVELOPMENTAL DRAMA

(A 12-part series on the basics of Developmental Drama to help students, teachers, and institutions)

1 - Evolving a Script

Everything in life has a story. But drama? Drama is the story that lives and breathes through a deliberately scripted narrative, crafted with precision, care, and emotion.

We've all come across school plays or stage performances that have moved us deeply with joy, laughter, or even tears. But have we ever stopped to think about what makes them so compelling? The answer lies in the script and the people who bring it to life.

At St. Paul's School, Rajkot, we had the opportunity to understand this process through collaboration with Vaz Dramatics Academy (VDA), Bangalore, which introduced us to Developmental Drama. The mentors from VDA had just arrived in Rajkot during Makar Sankranti, and they were amazed to see hundreds of colourful kites dotting the sky. That simple, beautiful image became the local cultural incorporation for the script of "The Wright Brothers." A Developmental Drama concept to help students understand that we can 'fly' with our imagination.

It was during the training that we realized that drama doesn't start on stage; it begins with a spark – an idea, a story that can change the world for everyone.

From Thought to Word

The journey of writing a script begins with an idea. It could be a real-life incident, a historic event, or even an abstract emotion, ideally, with an existing narrative that unfolds with its ups and downs. For us, it was the idea of flight, chasing big dreams despite obstacles. That central theme helped us shape the rest of the script: a beginning that introduced the characters and setting, a middle filled with conflict or humour, and an ending that brought resolution or left the audience

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thinking. The real-life story of the Wright Brothers had enough drama for the stage!

Some of us leaned into dramatic tones, having the characters engage in serious conflicts, while others imagined and portrayed light-hearted, cheerful scenes. The emotions we put into the script as a group of enthusiastic students reflected who we were.

From Word to ACTion



Incorporating group work with a local flavour in the script to connect with the audience

We also learned that a script is never just about the story. It's about the audience. We asked ourselves: What would the people watching this play feel? What are the emotions and memories they would carry? More importantly, what are the things that we would remember as Developmental Drama participants?

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We incorporated elements of connectivity, such as adding lines in our local language, incorporating jokes, and using kites as props. These small additions made the play feel rooted in our lives. It wasn't just a story about the Wright Brothers anymore; it became a story we could all relate to.

Throughout this journey, we were guided by our Developmental Drama facilitators. Soundharya Ma'am from Vaz Dramatics Academy, who has written over 100 scripts for developmental drama, says, *“One should always remember that there has to be a value, a moral, for the students to take away while enacting a script.”*

Those words stayed with us. We realized that in every Developmental Drama script we write, there should be a lesson, something that changes not just the audience, but the performers first.

From ACTION to Experience



The give and take of paired work as a part of the Developmental Drama syllabus

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Three years ago, when we performed The Wright Brothers play, we applied everything we had learned through the Developmental Drama programme. Through humour, spontaneous improvisation, local culture, and meaningful dialogue, we connected with the audience.

We also understood something important: drama isn't only about performance; it's an activity, a way of thinking, of imagining, of speaking, and experiencing the world.

Shakespeare's plays reached a wide range of people because they spoke to genuine emotions and everyday struggles. We hoped that our stories, no matter how small, could have the same effect.

In this programme, we were encouraged to share freely, every idea, every emotion, and every doubt. We learned that the world we create on stage begins in our minds. A world that you imagine is a world that can exist.

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(St. Paul's School, Rajkot, in collaboration with Vaz Dramatics Academy, Bangalore, as part of Class IX – ICSE – Mass-Media Communication syllabus.)