

Sample Lesson: Class One — Introduction to Dreamworld

The following sample class provides a glimpse into how Dreamworld merges storytelling, mindfulness, and drama-based learning to foster emotional awareness and teamwork in children. Each session begins in the *waking world*—where students learn specific skills such as focus, communication, or empathy—and then transitions into *Dreamworld*, where those same skills are tested through imaginative, story-driven play.

This first class establishes the foundations of trust, emotional expression, and group cohesion through movement, music, and discovery. Drawing from techniques used in drama therapy, creative movement, and child-centered play therapy, the structure allows students to express themselves freely while developing self-regulation, cooperation, and confidence—all within the safe, magical framework of Dreamworld.

CLASS ONE: INTRODUCTION TO DREAMWORLD

Structure:

Each Dreamworld class begins and ends in a circle — a symbolic and practical container for group connection, reflection, and safety.

1. Opening Circle – The Wiggle

After roll call, students introduce themselves and perform their “**Wiggle**” — a self-created movement paired with a sound that expresses how they feel that day. The Wiggle can be small or grand, quiet or loud, silly or calm — it simply needs to feel true to them.

Purpose and Pedagogical Justification:

- This activity draws from **drama therapy’s use of embodied expression** (Landy, 1994) to help children externalize internal states safely.
- It also mirrors **non-directive play therapy**, where the facilitator validates a child’s self-expression rather than correcting it, reinforcing autonomy and emotional literacy.
- Dramatically, the Wiggle establishes *ensemble trust* — a cornerstone of theater education (Boal, Heathcote, Spolin) — allowing students to share space, take creative risks, and witness one another’s individuality.

By the end of this ritual, the group has collectively released tension, begun emotional attunement, and built a shared vocabulary for expression.

2. Story Setup – The Call to Adventure

Once introductions are complete, the facilitator transitions the group into imaginative mode:

“You are about to enter Dreamworld — a realm made from forgotten dreams. Did you think dreams disappear when you wake up? No... they drift far away and join millions of others, forming a world that exists in another realm. Only those with courage and imagination — the Dream Explorers — can enter. And lucky for you... that’s exactly who you are.”

The teacher tells them that the *Origin Book of Dreamworld* — which reveals how the first Dream Explorers began — has been stolen by a mischievous fairy and scattered around the room. The group must work together to find its pages using clues left behind.

Educational Justification:

- This blends **process drama** and **guided fantasy**, both used in creative pedagogy to develop empathy and problem-solving through role assumption (Wagner, 1976).
- The *search-and-find* structure promotes **collaborative goal-setting**, **spatial awareness**, and **executive function** as children follow clues while sustaining focus and self-control.
- The narrative layer (“stolen book”) gives purpose to play, turning exploration into a shared mission — a foundational technique in **Heathcote’s mantle of the expert**, where students take on empowered roles within a fictional frame.

3. The Origin Story – The Campfire

Once all the pages are found, the group regathers for the first time around the **Campfire** — a red light surrounded by darkness, with the sound of a crackling fire playing softly.

The Campfire becomes a recurring ritual space — a *sacred circle* of storytelling, safety, and connection. Here, the teacher reads the *Origin of Dreamworld* aloud, illuminated only by the warm glow of light and imagination.

Justification and Impact:

- The Campfire models **containment and grounding**, core principles in play therapy, signaling to children that there are predictable spaces of safety amid imaginative exploration.

- The use of light, sound, and spatial focus activates multiple sensory modalities — enhancing **memory encoding** and emotional engagement (Fleming & Mills, 1992).
- Dramaturgically, it mirrors ancient oral storytelling practices, connecting students to a shared cultural lineage of listening, reflection, and imagination.

The story ends with a promise:

“Next time, you’ll take your first foray — if you’re ready — into the magical, mystical realm of Dreamworld.”

This cliffhanger sparks anticipation, establishing the **episodic rhythm** of the Dreamworld curriculum, which relies on continuity and progressive narrative stakes to sustain engagement and develop perseverance.

4. Learning Outcomes for Class One

By the end of this first session, students will have:

- Practiced **embodied emotional expression** through the Wiggle.
- Experienced **group cohesion and safety** through the circle ritual.
- Engaged in **cooperative problem-solving** via the book search.
- Demonstrated **focus, listening, and imagination** during the campfire story.
- Internalized a sense of **anticipation and ownership** within a structured creative world.