

Separation Wall



'This wall has ears. This wall has eyes. Its foundation stones are in all of us.'

A Theatre-in-Education programme for KS2/3

devised by

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Introduction:

Separation Wall is an exploration of how walls separate people from each other and themselves. These walls are both physical and psychological. By exploring the barriers to our freedom we are offering the young people (aged 8-12) an opportunity through fiction to locate themselves in the real world as they traverse that uncomfortable space between child and adulthood.

The programme is also an exploration of radical innocence and community. What is radical innocence?

When a baby is born into the world it does not distinguish between itself and the world, it is the world. The baby responds to life enhancing forces such as warmth, comfort and food but is also instinctively aware of opposite forces. These early responses to pleasure and pain are transformed when the child has a mind and enters the ideologised social world. The significant thing here is that the basis of the adult's humanity has been formed during this early (neonate) period and later becomes socialised as the child enters the world of recognised meanings. The child finds itself in conflict with the social structure. This conflict is a fundamental human drive to be at home in the world, a necessity of the mind, the 'radical innocence' striving for justice in an unjust world.

A sense of justice, however, is vital if our society is to be governed by human rather than inhuman values. But the need for justice is always prey to the pressure of ideology, so the child needs the space create itself with human value. Drama can provide this space because we attain these values through the use of the imagination; we can inhabit a more human society through imagining the possible rather than the actual.

Drama and theatre offers a purposeful structure for imagination.

"In the theatre the spectator's total subjectivity is involved, that is the nexus between the elements of his or her subjectivity. What holds that person together and so what constitutes them psychically is invoked in the role of spectator. The spectator is under self-examination because of his value judgements are invoked, his sense of self - and he is asked to practice being himself in relation to new and disrupting connections, or confirm himself in relation to reassuring ones. The stage makes the audience practice at being itself; clearly a play or production can either reassure the audience or provoke self discovery, because the member of the audience will be using himself in anew way (say, experiencing the consequences of the particular values (and habitual actions based on these) by which he lives, or having to experience and assess (create himself in relation to new situations). The reality of the stage comes from the reality of the audience's value-existence, which is very real to them...." (Edward Bond, playwright)

We believe that young people are not undeveloped adults, but people with specific experiences and concerns that go to the heart of being human. We believe that the curriculum takes little account of this, the curriculum is instrumentalist placing cognitive skills above what life is for, providing technical expertise devoid of human context. In doing so we are building yet more walls separating children from themselves and the world.

“A child may absorb all the skills of a closed society and not have the ability to judge or question the values of that society. We may need other ways to open a child’s mind to the deeper questions about society and human existence, not only to challenge the child but to get the child to challenge us and our culture. Perhaps there is something more important than the developing of cognitive skills, perhaps we can help even the youngest child to embark on a search for wisdom, the development of that child’s own values and philosophy of life.” (Teaching Children to Think, Robert Fisher)

We have chosen to do this by creating a highly participatory lived-through drama that engages their radical innocence. In *Separation Wall* the young people are in the story with actors, more than this they are the playwrights of their own experience - they are in role, as parents (no one understands the responsibility of being a parent better). As parents they have a complex social problem to solve and are given responsibility for the dramatic situation. They are given responsibility for the (fictional) community, a context, to which they can bring all the knowledge and expertise they hold to bear on the problems it faces. In doing this the participants are taking responsibility for themselves and their own learning. This active engagement of the imagination creates real values in the drama because as participants in it they can think feelingly/feel thinkingly; values that can later be applied to their real lives.

Separation Wall

At the end of the TIE programme your children have made with Big Brum, the class presents you, their teacher, with a brick. This brick which will be a foundation for a new kind of wall from the one they have been exploring, detailed what the class was interested in exploring further following their experience. Hopefully, this mandate has proved productive and you have been able to develop further work with the class, which explores the walls that separate us from ourselves and each other.

If, however, you feel that the invitation on the brick is too open to be productive for your situation, we offer the following three (outline) lesson plans to be adapted to your own specific needs for follow-up lessons. Each lesson plan is grounded in the fictive context of *Separation Wall*, relying not so much on drama-based expertise or experience, but more on the expertise that teachers have as storytellers for their children structured in a very enactive way.

NOTE: Because of the highly participatory nature of *Separation Wall*, each performance of the programme is very different from one day to the next. The problem remains the same, as does the role the children inhabit and some of the dramatic incidents they witness, but what happens is entirely dependent upon the 'playwrighting' the children do in collaboration with the company. We apologise therefore if what is suggested below appears a repetition of what your class has already experienced, some of the dramatic situations outlined below may indeed have occurred in your school. We do hope, however, that you will feel able to adapt the way of working that the lesson plans offer to the content areas you would want to explore further with your class.

The lessons are centrally concerned with three learning areas which we feel are of central importance to *Separation Wall*, and underpin each exploration between young people and the Company. They are:

1. **Walking the Line:** Exploring the role of play in development
2. **On the Other Side of the Wall:** The fear of the unknown, what is on the other side of the walls separating communities
3. **Foundation Stones:** The fear and distrust that emerges from the walls that separate people from each other and themselves

Walking the Line

In the programme both Zak and Ben use play as a means of expressing their developing understanding of the world in which they live; playing is a serious business. Their 'games' are embedded with meaning, showing at once their defiance for a regime that oppresses them without apparent reason, and reflecting their inherent need, as children, for justice.

Aim: To explore the significance of play in the development of young people.

You will need:

- Sugar paper and a large sheet of paper,
 - Marker pens.
 - Tape
1. Establish a space in the classroom and attach a large sheet of paper that is a rubbing taken from a real wall. Try to re-create a resonance of – at least the bricks and shades of colour – the wall they have encountered in the programme. This will be 'the wall' for the period spanning the follow-up lessons. It can be used to encode the understandings the class has made at the end of each session, a wall of knowledge upon which 'we can record our thoughts and feelings about what we have learned'.
 2. Begin the lesson by re-acquainting the class with the wall. Get them to look at it in silence. 'I know we know a great deal about this wall.... 'this wall has divided our community...etc'. Ask them what they see, hear, smell even, when they are close to it. Ask them what they remember. This will give a useful indication of what still resonates for the class following their experience.
 3. With gentle probing the class can remind itself of the dilemma facing the parents who live on 'this side'. The problem has not been resolved. Children, just like Zak and Ben, continue to play too close to the wall; they are ignoring the danger coming from the other side. Remind them of the consequences of crossing the line that runs parallel to the wall. [It is worth noting here that they will be acutely aware of the dangers because on some occasions in the programme Ben and Zak have paid the ultimate price for their play]. Ask the class to describe the kind of games that the children might play.
 4. Lay down another large sheet of paper. Ask a child from the class to lay on the sheet and draw their outline. Get the child to step back so that the whole class can look at the outline. Tell the class that this is Simon. He is 7 years old. He has been kept inside his home for most of his life. His

mother, like the rest of the community, was afraid what would happen to her son if he were allowed to grow up playing near the wall, and so has 'protected' him by keeping him inside. Recently, however, he was seen wandering down by the wall. This is because his mother has been forced to leave him unsupervised at home (perhaps the father has left, has disappeared or is dead). Simon is experiencing the wall for the first time.

5. As a class, develop the character of Simon using the outline. Write the students ideas about how Simon sees himself and his situation on the inside and ideas about how the community and 'the other side' see Simon on the outside. *How do you think he feels about himself? How do you think he feels about the world outside his home? What did he think he think and feel when he first saw the wall? What are his first impressions of the other children in the village?* This exercise can be developed further so that the pupils create a very concrete fictive context for Simon.
6. Return to the games that the children play by the wall that they have discussed earlier. Tell the class you want to look at one game in particular. Using yourself as a child, demonstrate the game of 'walking the line'. It may be useful to put some wide tape on the floor for this. This game, which your children may or may not have seen in the programme, is played by some of the older children who take it in turns to 'walk the line'. The line has been marked out by the people of the 'other side' as the point they must not cross over. It is a test of nerve and a taunt to those guarding the wall on behalf of the other side. The children who play it know that they must keep on the line and that if they lose balance and step over it, they risk being taken away or even shot. If you feel that the class can take responsibility for the game and its implications, invite other children to have a go (it might be helpful in this instance if there was tape on the floor). If a child does step over the line, stop the action and get the class to reflect on what happened to that child of the community – then invite the child to return to their seat and narrate the implication they have agreed upon. It is important to make clear to the class that they are witnessing children of the community, not that particular classmate playing the game.

NOTE: You are not being required to act being a child here, but demonstrate the significance of the line and the game. Move slowly signing your awareness of those who are watching you, make your gestures slow and deliberate, as if you are almost moving in slow motion. This helps the class to read what you are signing to them.
7. Reflect upon what has just happened. What questions would Simon have at seeing the 'game'? What do you think he would want to know from the other children? Make a note of any questions that the pupils have as this will serve as a prompt for the following activity.
8. Ask the students to imagine that they are all children of this side of the wall. Use the outline effigy of Simon and ask the class, in role – 'as if you were one of the children that play this game...' - to explain their game to Simon.

Use these responses to develop their understanding further. This can take a variety of forms depending on the ability and nature of the class. Suggestions include:

- A written script showing the conversation that takes place between Simon and the other children.
 - A mural that the children have designed and seek to have painted on this side of the wall which demonstrates how they see the wall.
 - A speech to be given at a community meeting, in which the children defend their right to play by the wall.
 - A short piece of improvisation showing a scene where Simon approaches the older children.
 - A traditional song that like a nursery rhyme has passed into child folklore.
9. Finally get the children into groups. Remind them that children are always inventing games in play that explore what happens to them and around them in real life. Remind them of some of the games that they decided earlier, that the children of this community play by the wall. Ask them to build a still image/freeze frame, which shows us the children playing the game. Ask them to consider the way in which the wall and the people from 'the other side' effect the way they play the game, even if the children aren't fully aware of it. Share the work and record it in some way.
10. Remind them that in the programme they watched Ben and Zak playing with the furniture. Part of the reason for this is that the children of this side of the wall are very poor. They do not have toys, computers, TVs etc to entertain them. Working on their own, in a form you feel appropriate (This could be a written story, a drawn story board etc), ask the class to imagine what Simon plays at in the privacy of his own home after meeting the other children by the wall. Help them to consider what his house is like and the things in it he could use when he is playing. Share this work as a whole class.
11. At the end of the session (we appreciate this could be developed into many more than one session) place the outline on the wall and add any other material the class have created to it – questions they have asked, images created and recorded on camera etc. This will then provide a bridge into the next session. Similarly the same can be done if this session spreads out over more than one lesson as a way of leading into or out of the session – encoding 'the understandings we have made so far' – and giving authority to the fictive context.

On the Other Side of the Wall

AIM: To explore the fear of the unknown, what is on the other side of the walls separating communities through the significance of objects, engaging in simple role work.

NOTE: This session is built around the arrival of an interloper from the 'other side'. It would be best if the interloper were a child, just like Simon. However, this may have occurred already in the programme on the day your class worked with the Company, in which case we suggest that the interloper is a man or woman. These notes will refer to the 'child interloper' for the sake of ease.

Materials:

- Pens and paper
- Bag of objects, sign, letter etc

A 'message' from the Other Side:

1. Gather the class around the wall the annotated outline of Simon on the wall. Allow the class to remind themselves about the significance of play in this community through re-counting, re-sharing, re-telling Simon's experience. Then tell them you want to share something further with them...

(Begin to speak in role as a member of the community/first person implying that 'we' as the community have further concerns to consider...)

'Time has moved on since last we talked to Simon'-lead them into a discussion about the state of the water supply. They can remind themselves of time they stood in the queue and the Water Man came – what happened on that day and what the community decided to do.

2. Then back into the story. Tell them that as we parents all knew might be the case, despite all warnings etc. the children have continued to play down by the wall. In fact things are getting out of hand. The stone throwing and calling has got worse. [NOTE: by the use of 'we parents' that you are edging them class into role as the parents of the community. Don't worry if they do not take this on at first. You can always stop the drama – move back to teacher register and remind them of how they worked in the programme and ask them to take it on again. Then move back into the story.] And as punishment 'look what the people from the other side have had plastered all over this side.' Show them a sign:

COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Continuing misconduct by youth of this side means that water rations will be reduced until further notice. The electricity supply will be cut from 6pm to 6am forthwith.

BY ORDER.

Discuss the sign and what its implications are with the parents. Get them to speculate on what it will mean in their homes. What does it tell us about the people of the other side?

3. Resume the story (In role – ‘have you heard what happened to the Water Man?’ or narrated – ‘One of the parents began to tell a story about what to the Water Man’). ‘Something very strange occurred when the Water Man was bringing water back from the other side yesterday. He had water alright, although he wasn’t sure how much there was in the tank... but on the way back he thought he heard a funny noise round the back of the truck. Didn’t know what it was. So he pulled over, he was worried that he hadn’t fastened the chains up properly on the back...so he pulled over and got out. Just as he was stepping down from the cabin he heard a scurrying noise. Out of the corner of his eye he saw something slip into the bushes on the other side. He wandered over, cautiously like because you know we’ve been having trouble with the dogs round here, some of them can get real nasty because of the shortage of food, but he couldn’t see anything. He called out...silence etc.’

Then go on to explain how when the Water Man returned to the community to sell the water, one of the parents noticed something sticking out of the lorry, wedged under the water tank. A bag.

4. Present the class with a bag of objects. Speculate in role, ‘Whoever was on the back of that lorry must have been from the other side.’ Moreover...’they must be hiding somewhere round here’. Begin to gather the parents and look at the contents of the bag. What can we learn about this person from looking at the contents of his bag? What do the objects suggest about the people or situation on the other side? Do the items say anything about how they see people on this side of the wall?

5. The objects should be indicative of how the people on the other side live. It would be very good if the bag contains actual objects, but they could also be ironically represented. Items need to suggest something about the individual (ideally a child) but also the people and setting on the other side the wall. It must strike us, even if it is not articulated, that in many ways they must be ‘just like us’. Items in the bag could include a children’s book, a teddy bear, a photo, an unfinished letter to a parent or a loved one, pre-packaged food (objects that speak of what we know as our contemporary culture and contrast with the objects they associate with this side of the wall.)

6. Once they have reflected on the objects ask the parents to determine who this person is – if it is a child draw the outline of a child. What could they tell you about this child based on what they have seen? Encourage the class to be as creative and thoughtful as possible, while grounding their understanding in the objects themselves. As a group build an identity for this new character-name, age, background, family, occupation (if appropriate) feelings about the wall and people on this side etc. Draw an outline for him/her as in session one.
7. On the basis of what has been gleaned, decide what to do about the child from the other side who is on the loose on this side. They are obviously fearful of something, the letter tells us that they have left in a hurry. Why would anyone want to do that? The people on the other side are rich, they have free flowing water, they have huge schools and hospitals etc. Perhaps there are problems on the other side too?
8. Suggest that they try to make contact with whoever it is. This child has begun to write a letter to communicate with their parents, perhaps we could write a letter to them. Get the parents to do this, either as a whole group activity or in groups.
9. Narrate that the parents left the letter by the Water Man's truck with the bag over night. The next day the parents found a reply (already prepared by you). Give the reply, which has been written on paper from the pad that the unfinished letter was written on, to the parents. They cannot read it because it is in a foreign language, the language of the other side. Offer to translate it for them because you have a scratchy command of their language.
10. Have a community meeting to establish what to do next about this child interloper (of course this will be entirely determined by how they have responded to the interloper). Do they gradually win his/her trust? Do they capture this person? Narrate the outcome.
11. The next stage can be done in two ways. The parents need to meet the child from the other side to find out more about what divides them from each other, more about the wall. The encounter can be either through a) you in role as the child they have corresponded with **or** b) through using an outline, depending on how confident you feel in trying this. The aim of this task is to find out enough about the other side in order to respond to the needs of the child interloper and to find a collective response to the order they have been looking about the water and electricity supply. This could take the form of:
 - A taped message to be taken to the other side by the Waterman.
 - A letter to be delivered by the Waterman
 - A verbal message, to be delivered by the child interloper if they are willing to return and/or it doesn't represent too much of a threat to them.
 - A series of pictures.
 - A song.
 - A gift of some sort

12. At the end of the session place all the materials they have made today in relation to what they have already put on the wall. Let them look. Speak with some reverence about their work. 'We now have two children. A whole new picture is beginning to emerge. So much to find out about, so much see...I wonder what our next session will bring?' Let them look more before closing the session.

NOTE on a) Stepping into role:

We hope that having witnessed the programme and hopefully enjoyed a successful lesson one you will feel able to give this a try.

Things to consider when stepping into role:

The use of space – make a space for you to step into, perhaps in front of the wall, or a small cramped space which suggests where the child interloper has been hiding.

The use of objects – have the bag and the pen and paper set in the space. Perhaps one of the food items has been opened-a bite out of one of the biscuits etc.

The use of image – Inform the parents that they are going to be able to speak to him/her, but first they need to watch. 'Be quiet they don't know you're watching...' then step in and take up a still image for them to look at. Step out of the image again and reflect on how the person is- what they are doing, how they think they are feeling. Then ask what the parents ought to ask him/her before moving on so that they can actually ask.

The use of action – step back in and begin to do something in relation to the objects which further reflect and deepens the class' reading of the image.

Slowing real time down – make your gestures slow and deliberate. Be very particular so that they can give a precise reading of the signing you offer.

The use of language - Notice the presence of the parents. Speak to them, inviting them to speak, and of course pursue the line of enquiry they have already discussed with you out of role. Concentrate on heightening your language, making it other to theirs. Remember it is always possible to stop the drama and step out of role as the child interloper and as parents to reflect on what is happening in order to reinforce the rules of the fiction and deepen the class' understanding.

NOTE on b) If working on the outline, structure the encounter in a way which allows the students to respond 'as if they were the voice' of the outline to the parents' questions, an improvisational dialogue will emerge. As above, remember it is always possible to stop the drama and step out of role as the child and as parents to reflect on what is happening in order to reinforce the rules of the fiction and deepen the class' understanding.

Foundation Stones:

AIM; To explore through the fictive context the fear and distrust that emerges from the walls that separate people from each other and themselves.

Materials:

- Pens and paper, card and transparent paper or some such material.
1. Gather around the wall and the work from the previous two sessions, which are now arranged on the wall. Then place the outline of Simon on the floor. Discuss what has happened to him during their exploration and speculate on what the future holds for the child of this side of the wall. Try not to get into a narrative 'what happened next', so much as his hopes, aspirations, fears and concerns based upon what we already know about him. What is his relationship to the other children in the community? Ask the children to take it in turns to develop these thoughts as if they were Simon. Record their thoughts.
 2. Then create another outline, this time of Simon's mother. What is his relationship to his mother now after going down to the wall, after seeing all he has seen? What do they think her hopes, aspirations, fears and concerns for her son are? Ask the children to take it in turns to develop these thoughts as if they were Simon's mother. Record their thoughts.
 3. Take the outline of the child from session two from the wall and place it alongside the others. Go through a similar process based upon the situation you created in the classroom. Ask the children to take it in turns to speak his thoughts as if they were the child interloper from the other side. Record these thoughts.
 4. Then create another outline of Simon. Tell the class this is Simon. Only a different Simon. It is his self. A part of him that he doesn't yet know. Discuss what they think Simon has yet to find out about himself. Ask the children to take it in turns to speak Simon's thoughts to himself. What advice would he give himself? Record these thoughts.
 5. Give each child bricks made of some transparent (but reasonably durable material) that they can write or draw on. Tell the class that everything that these people say or think or do is shaped by that wall. Tell them you know, however, that that wall has its foundation in all of us. Its as if they have bricks that make up a wall inside them, that separates them off. Invite the class to find a word, or words, or draw a picture, taken from all the things they know about the wall, this side, the other side, Simon, the other children etc. that helps us to understand why these people have bricks inside them. Ask them to write the words or draw their picture on the brick they have been given.

6. When this is done gather the class around the wall (try to organise space and bodies that give the sharing a ritual significance where everything can be seen and heard). Ask each child to show their brick – say the word/s, describe their picture and place it on the outline of their choice/where it belongs. It may be useful for you to complete the task yourself and model the ritual, placing the brick on Simon, Simon's self, mother, or the child interloper.
7. Allow time for the class to look at the whole, in silence, in order to appreciate and value the power of the work they have created.