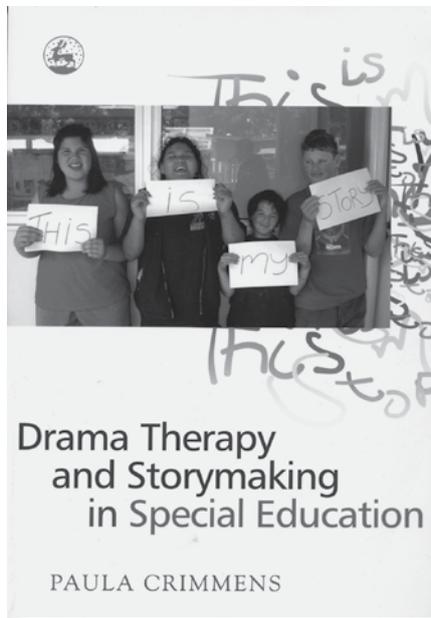


Book Reviews



Drama Therapy and Storymaking in Special Education

by Paula Crimmens

Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2006)

Reviewed by Caroline Miller, Drama Therapist

This is a readable and interesting book which is also a great resource for all those working with this population, whilst containing the possibility of adaptation for working with others. It would be useful for drama teachers, general teachers, support staff, or group therapists interested in working in an action oriented way.

The material is well organised, the language presents ideas in an accessible way, and the style is fresh, warm, and interesting.

The material is organised around themes with a selection of stories for each theme. The chapter themes are: helping others; dealing with change; working as a team; trickery and stealing; stories of a special child; unlikely heroes; competitiveness; and trust. The author demonstrates how relatively simple materials can be used to create other worlds within which to explore these themes. In each case there is a detailed list of resources, and the way they have been used. The book also

provides ideas about how the classroom layout may be modified to suit the dramatherapy activities. Other chapters outline ways of devising stories to explore themes, the use of a visual storyboard, and a research study based on work aimed at engaging the attention of students with particular difficulties. Background information is provided about group expectations, assessment, and safety, all of which have implications for running any therapy group.

Crimmens gives a clear picture of the range of personalities and needs of children in special education, and ways to accommodate different developmental levels and particular interests of the students. There is a focus on sensory stimulation through drama. The author relates how some students who seem very passive and under-stimulated can be alerted by a particular touch or sound, and then become able to participate in previously unexpected ways. Crimmens makes reference to students with multiple disabilities, which includes very

creative approaches to finding ways in which they can participate with enjoyment in a meaningful way.

While this book is located within a specific modality and with a specific population, it contains ideas and resources which could be adapted by art, music, or movement therapists, or those working inter-modally. The ideas and structures could also be adapted for working with other populations. Because it is written as a very practical guide, and because it provides clear frameworks for working, it is especially open to this kind of adaptation, particularly by those therapists seeking a rationale and a model for working with groups. It can be recommended to a variety of therapists and would be particularly useful to those co-working through the use of different modalities, like an art therapist working with a dramatherapist, or a music therapist working with a movement therapist.

A further recommendation is that the author, Paula Crimmens, is writing about her experience with an Australasian (in this case New Zealand) client group, so she has added significantly to the growing body of literature describing work with familiar populations and approaches for this part of the world.

Paula Crimmens is a Sesame trained dramatherapist with a Master of Arts in Arts Therapy, from Whitecliffe College in Auckland. Within New Zealand, she has been active in various creative therapy initiatives such as working as a dramatherapist in Special Schools, working with young people at risk, founding her own Certificate in Dramatherapy, and furthering the work of the Creative Therapies Association of Aotearoa. Paula has previously published "Storymaking and Creative Groupwork with Older People", also with Jessica Kingsley Publishers.