

Forum Theatre – fair trade

Aim - Forum Theatre is an interactive and dynamic process that can raise a wide range of issues to be explored and discussed. It gives people a chance to reflect and reassess situations and try out what can and needs to be done in a safe environment. The process provides a chance to try out arguments and 'rehearse for reality'.

Forum Theatre is recognised by the United Nations through UNESCO as a 'tool' for social change. It has been used all over the world to influence legislation and develop a civil society of engaged and enlightened individuals, respectful of human rights and responsibilities. The aim is always to stimulate debate (in the form of action, not just words), to show alternatives and make sense of problems. It gives people the strength and confidence to make changes in their own lives. People can free their memories, emotions, imaginations and thinking. They can examine their past and present and invent their future.

How does it work?

In small groups people are asked to enact real life situations, which either ended badly, were never resolved or they are about to face. The rest of the group then watches these and everyone is invited to suggest how they think the situations can be improved or resolved. These ideas are tried out until a better way of dealing with the problem is found. The scene can also be stopped, rewound, have its direction changed, character motives adjusted, language revised and body language focused. The audience either suggest what they want the 'actors' in the situations to do to show or the audience can become 'spect-actors' and take on the roles themselves. Whichever method is chosen the audience become actively involved rather than just being passive onlookers.

Suggested themes -

- Persuading a stranger in a supermarket to buy Fairtrade bananas
- Asking a supermarket manager to stock Fairtrade bananas
- Asking your manager at work to provide Fairtrade drinks and food for staff
- Persuading friends and family to buy Fairtrade goods
- Banana plantation worker asking the manager to stop spraying pesticides while people are at work
- Persuading a worker to join a trade union

Let's get started

1. Split the group into pairs.
2. Choose a number of themes and give each pair one theme to work on.
3. Pairs have 5 – 10 minutes to try out the arguments in role and create a scene to show the rest of the group.
4. Each pair runs their scene in front of the audience.
5. At the end of each one the audience are invited to suggest ways in which the protagonist – the person making the argument for Fairtrade - could adjust what s/he said or did and make a stronger argument or achieve a better outcome.
6. The scene is then rewound and played again with the new changes added in.
7. The person in the audience suggesting the change could also take the place of the person in the scene and have a go themselves.
8. The audience is invited to try out as many changes as they like until the best possible argument or outcome is achieved.

It is important to understand that the characters listening to the argument, such as the supermarket manager or friend, can only change what they do or say in the light of changes the protagonist makes.