

Education in the North



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BOOK REVIEW

Try This ... Unlocking Learning with Imagination

Tim Taylor and Viv Aitken

Norwich: Singular Publishing (2023) 250pp.

ISBN: 978-1-739-66254-7

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BOOK REVIEW

Try This ... Unlocking Learning with Imagination

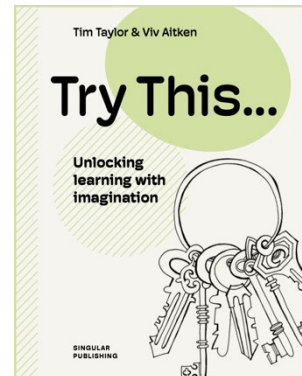
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Try This is a labour of love written by two brilliant teachers and teacher educators, for teachers and teacher educators. Tim Taylor and Viv Aitken have succeeded at the daunting task of making the complexity of dramatic inquiry easily accessible to the teaching profession. Using compelling examples with insightful analysis they show how any teacher can indeed *unlock learning with imagination*.

This book will be invaluable not only for seasoned teachers already comfortable with improvising in the classroom but also in supporting beginning teachers embarking on the path of imaginative experimentation that is essential for all who hope to become better educators. Teachers unfamiliar with the pedagogical potential of drama as education and who pick up this book will have a set of keys that they can use to find out for themselves how teaching and learning can be transformed by dramatic inquiry.

I wish I had had this book when I was a young classroom teacher. It would have been the catalyst I yearned for when I needed approaches that were innovative yet not overwhelming and that were both engaging and located in the curriculum. It would have helped me make sense of the complex pedagogies of Dorothy Heathcote and could have supported me in applying the practices that I had begun to learn on my master course with her.

I value the respectful tone of the book. You feel addressed as a colleague. As a busy professional. As a person who values all children and their cultures. As an educator who understands the need to create a humanizing community in every classroom. I look forward to using this book to help the teachers I work with embrace the power of dramatic inquiry in the classroom.

I appreciate the book's thoughtful organization. The predictable layout means you can easily move among the 40 keys at the heart of the book. Parallel examples provide comparisons that illuminate subtleties. Cross references invite you to find similarities that will deepen your understanding. Line drawings are illuminating. Grounding principles come first and can easily be returned to. Deepening ideas round out the text showing how keys can be combined as part of more complex dramatic inquiry.

And because a hard copy of the book is spiral bound you can have easy access in the classroom to whatever key you might want to try out as well as a fold out chart of all 40 keys.

Other books written to introduce teachers to dramatic and imaginative approaches have longer examples, more academic analysis, or are more specialized. Whereas some can feel intimidating, *Try This* is the most teacher-friendly book that I know of. It is accompanied by a website that includes information about each key, along with videos, and an ongoing blog. There is also a list of glowing testimonials which you should read if you are in any doubt about using *Try This* in your classroom <https://www.trythisbook.org/testimonials/>