**No, You Can't Take Me!**

http://www.childdrama.com/lpno.html#top

This game teaches confidence, pantomime, and critical thinking. It's also a lot of fun. I have used it with children from Kindergarten to Middle School - obviously with varying levels of sophistication. It looks more complicated than it is - I've never had trouble making my students understand it.

I didn't make this up, although I suspect I have made changes in it. I have used it for years, and I can't remember who gave it to me.

**Preparation**

After explaining the game a little, break the class into small groups-three to five or so. Each group is given a room in the house--the bedroom, the living room, the kitchen, the basement, the garage, etc. (You can use the bathroom as well if you think your students can handle it. Mine get too silly.) If you want to, you can put the names of rooms on cards and have each group draw one. Don't let the students know what rooms the other groups have.

Within each group, each student chooses one thing that would be found in the room. (For example, if the room is the kitchen, one student might be the refrigerator, one the stove, one the sink, etc.) Side-coach as necessary. After choosing an object, each student practices "being" that object.

Each student must think of at least one--or with older kids, several--good reasons that their object is important. Side-coach them to ask themselves what would happen if the thing were not there.

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**Playing the Game:**

Work with one group at a time. The other groups become audience--which is incidentally an opportunity to practice being a good audience.

The teacher goes to the first group and exclaims, "My, look at all this useless stuff! I've got to get rid of some of this junk!" (Or some such.) The teacher selects one student and says, "I think I'll take THIS thing away."

The student replies, "NO, YOU CAN'T TAKE ME!"

"Why not?"

The student answers, without mentioning the name of his object, in this form: "If you take me away. . ." followed by something that would go wrong without the object. (For example, if the student is pretending to be the bed, she might say, "If you take me away, no one will get any sleep." A student pretending to be a wastebasket might say, "If you took me, there would be trash all over the place.")\*

Once all the students have had their say, the audience tries to guess what room they are in, and then what object each student is. Then the teacher moves on to the next group.

\* With younger children, I usually stop at one answer. But with older students, I don't give up so easily. I improvise some reason that the student's first answer isn't compelling enough. "Well, I never sleep anyway." "I like trash on the floor. I'm taking you anyway." In this way I ask the students to think of more than one reason that something is important. If the students are sophisticated enough, I encourage them to think of creative answers. A student pretending to be the bed might say, "What would the kids jump on?" A student pretending to be a lawnmower once said, "We'd get our feet wet walking through the yard." He meant that the long grass would hold water when it rained.

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**Variations**

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**Immigrants Variation**

My fourth-graders were studying immigrants and Ellis Island. I developed this variation of the game because they specially requested that we play this game (which they remember from playing it in the third grade), and my special project this year is to tie my fourth-grade curriculum into their Social Studies and Language Arts work. It is played in basically the same way, with the following changes:

First I divide the class into three groups. One group becomes the "old country," one the "ship," and one the "new country"‹in our case New York in the nineteenth century.

The students in the "old country" group had to come up with something that an immigrant might have to leave behind‹something that would be difficult to leave behind. (Cherished furniture, a pet or a friend, the silver, favorite toys, etc.) The students in the "ship" group become something (or someone, if you want) on board a ship that an immigrant might need on a long journey. (A bunk or hammock, the captain, the boat¹s engine, lifeboats, etc.) The students in the "new country" group become something a new immigrant would need in his or her new land. (A grocery story, an apartment, an English book, dollars, etc.)

When I approach the first group I say something like, "Gee, I don¹t have room to pack all of this! I¹ll have to leave THIS behind!"

"No, you can¹t leave ME behind!"

With the second group I say, "The ship is too full. I¹ll have to throw something overboard. I think I¹ll throw THIS overboard!"

"No, you can¹t throw ME overboard!"

With the third group I say, "There¹s so many things in this new country. It¹s all so confusing. I think I¹ll get rid of some of it. I think I¹ll throw THIS away!"

"No, you can¹t throw ME away!"

My students seem to really understand and enjoy this variation.

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**Parts of the Body Variation**

Instead of a room in a house, the "place" is the human body, and each student becomes a different body part.  For example, one student might become a nose, another a lung, another a foot, and so on.  (I have never had difficulty with students choosing "inappropriate" body parts, but of course that's something to watch, and if you have a group you think is inclined that way, it is probably best to nip it in the bud and specifically forbid "inappropriate" responses.)

Teacher says, "Wow, this person's body is SO complicated!  I don't think we need all these parts.  I think I'm going to take THIS part away."

From here the game is played exactly as in the basic game.  Students must think of reasons that their particular body part is important.  A nose:  "If you take me, you won't be able to smell the flowers!"  A foot:  "Without me, you'd have to walk on your hands!"  A heart:  "If you take me away, how will you get your blood to your body?"  An ear might say, "How could you hear anything?" but one once said to me, "If you take me away, your hat will fall down over your eyes and you won't be able to see!"

Usually this works best with the whole class at once, rather than broken into groups, but a more advanced class could be divided into groups according to kinds of body parts--one group could be internal organs, one bones, and one muscles, for example.

In its simple form this variation works even with pre-Kindergarten, yet is challenging enough for much older students.

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**Rainforest Variation**

This is explained in more detail in [**Rainforest Lessons,**](http://www.childdrama.com/rainforest.html) but the basic idea is that the "room" is replaced with a rainforest, and students must become different plants or animals that inhabit it, and explain why each is important to humankind.  A conservation exercise.

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**Book Variation**

Each group chooses a book, and then each person in the group becomes a character or an object that is important to the story.  Then the instructor comes around with a giant (imaginary) eraser, and threatens to erase each in turn.  Depending on the level of the students, you can coach them to respond by explaining their character or object's importance in general, or, with a more advanced group, by explaining their character or object's importance *to the story.* (For example, a student representing Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web* might talk about the importance of spiders in the balance of nature, but a more advanced student might instead say something like, "But if you erase me, who will teach the main character self-confidence?" or "Who will teach the reader about the circle of life?")

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**General Tips and Variations**

I have done this exercise with states or countries instead of rooms.  I have also done it with everyone AS a different state.  (They had to come up with a reason that state is important to the whole country.)

I have done this exercise with time periods instead of rooms.

With Kindergarten I sometimes do it without the guessing.  (In other words, I simply "guess" myself what each item is, rather than throwing it open to the class.)  On the other hand, some Kindergarten classes do quite well with the guessing.

With a small class, or a very young one, I don't divide the class into groups, but conduct the game with the whole class as one group.  This avoids the difficulties inherent in paying particular attention to one group while the other is left to its own devices.