Definitions:

**Role Play**: Students take on the role of another person in an imaginary (but possibly real life) situation. It is open ended and acts as a good assessment tool. Usually more time consuming, especially if students research for roles.
Simulation: Students act as themselves, but the group role, task or situation is imaginary. Usually open ended and can be used as a hook, an anchor experience, or a culminating assessment. Usually shorter.

Reader’s Theater: There are set roles and set dialogue. Good for providing a hook at the beginning of a unit/cycle.

Debates: Students research and defend a point of view on a topic.

Mock Trials: Can be simulations or role plays of a courtroom situation. Great for historical research.

Mini-Dramas: Students can write their own scenarios based on historical or literary situations. Can act out or video.

Steps for Facilitating a Role Play

1. Begin with an end in mind. Define your objectives
   Students will...
   • Use research to build knowledge on the abolitionist movement
   • Critically read and interpret primary source documents
   • Form an argument and support it with evidence
   • Participate in (or understand) the procedures involved in a trial/negotiation/political campaign
   • Apply cycle learning on climate change to generate solutions to current problems

2. Establish your scenario, roles and organizational tools
   Will you assign roles or can they self-select?
   Do you want to create biographies for characters?
   Is the structure predetermined or open-ended?
   What is your time frame?
   How will you facilitate in order to keep on track?
   What will be the motivator?
   • Competition: Assign a Pro, a Con, and a Decision maker to be convinced
   • Conflict Resolution- Students have/are assigned different views but work together to either persuade or compromise to solve a problem.
   • Mystery: Students are given partial information and hypothesize the historical outcome
   • Cooperation: Students work together to beat the clock.
3. Determine and gather the supporting materials will you need
   - Props
   - Costumes
   - Documents/Biographies
   - Graphic Organizers for before and during activity
   - Schedule of activities
   - Food

4. Introduce the exercise and provide preparation time
   - Provide clear descriptions of what you want the students to do. (This is a good time to develop rubric together.)
   - Establish behavioral expectations, especially in possible high emotional situations
   - Provide resources or guideline for resources (for example, well developed background guides and reputable websites are better sources than a PR site). A list of websites or articles shortens time. A background guide and handout shortens it even more.
   - Provide tools for organizing and interpreting data ahead of time
   - Require name tag and costume/symbolic costume

In the beginning, provide:
- Time to read role, research, make or bring in costume
- Time to meet and discuss with others in like-minded group
- Time to research and establish perspective

5. Engage in the Role Play
   The teacher should, ideally, not intrude on the role play unless the students are confused or need clarification or modeling.

   The teacher has to help the students to maintain the “pretend” part of the simulations and role plays; students who don’t enter into the ‘make pretend” can ruin it for everyone else.

   Teacher input should (usually) be left for the after activity feedback session.

6. Discussion or Debriefing
   - Provide a writing component before discussion with prompts for reflecting on the experience and making connections
     - Deeper reflections
       - Content connections: “When __ did __, it reminded me of what we learned about ____.”
Social Skills connections: What I learned about myself and others, what worked and what didn’t work, what I used to think and what I know, how I worked to understand different perspectives and build consensus
  ○ Helps for those less inclined to public speaking and for those reflections people don’t want to share publicly

● Student facilitated discussion

7. Assessment

● Use the rubric you developed together with the students before the role play
● Sometimes it is beneficial with an extra large group to have role-players and observer to give post-activity feedback. (Switch after designated time)
● Have students self-assess and then meet with you (if possible) to discuss their perceptions.
● Post-activity writing reflection
● Use formative assessment data to inform instruction, address misconceptions, provide additional resources.

Role Plays I’ve done:
Abolitionist Meeting
Assembly Line Simulation (Lead to Strike Conditions)
Constitutional Congress
Trial of Columbus (with added primary source documents)
John Brown’s Defamation of Character Trial
Ellis Island/ Immigration Processing Center
Election Campaign Simulation
Rewrite of Declaration of Independence
Model UN (and Model UN Zombie Epidemic)
Strategic Peace Game (Untrained version of the World Peace Game)
Reenactment of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory
The King’s M&Ms
Microplastics Town Meeting

Sources

Websites with well developed Role Plays and Simulations and information:

https://zinnedproject.org
  Organic Goodies
  Airplane Simulation
Reconstruction (Online resources) Simulations:
http://education.harpweek.com/TheReconstructionConvention/TheCastOfCharacters/CastOfCharacters.htm

Impeachment of Andrew Jackson:
http://www.impeach-andrewjohnson.com/15ImpeachmentSimulationGame/SimulationGameTopPage.htm

Additional Role Playing Scenarios:  https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/roleplaying/scenario.html

Articles:

Keller, Clair. “Role Playing and Simulation in History Class.” The History Teacher, 1975
https://www.jstor.org/stable/492668?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

https://www.edutopia.org/blog/gamification-in-education-vicki-davis

http://www.uen.org/7-12interactives/social_studies.shtml

https://www.edutopia.org/second-life-virtual-reality-collaboration

https://www.edutopia.org/second-life-virtual-reality-collaboration

http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/edcafe.pdf


https://www.middleweb.com/13778/keeping-history-lessons-meaningful-role-play/