

Graffiti Theatre Company
presents
HOODS
by Angela Betzien

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Adrian McCarthy, UCC College of Arts Drama & Theatre Studies
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The Writer's Statement.

*I started to write this play some time ago. Three kids in a dirty white Kingswood abandoned in a car park. I had in my head this image of a baby wrapped in a wet newspaper nappy. At some point in the writing I looked over and in the distance of the car park I saw a man in an orange Datsun with a lighter in his hand. I became distracted and ended up telling his story in another play **Playboy of the Working Class**. I returned to the kids when I started to work on **The Real TV Project**, a collection of short plays inspired by the political theatre tradition of Living Newspaper. Living Newspaper was first used in Russia, primarily as a means of communication the news to a population which was largely illiterate. In the 1930's during the depression in the United States, Living Newspaper was again utilized by companies formed under the Federal Theatre Project, a massive visionary government effort to support thousands of unemployed theatre artists. The Real TV Project is about finding a new contemporary style of Living Newspaper, which deals with the Australian experience, particularly which the stories of those from the underclass, the alienated, and the oppressed. **The Kingswood Kids** is inspired by many actual, though non specific, incidents of children being left in cars, abandoned by their parents for hours at a time. Children are an obsession with me; they seem to creep into my work without my knowing it. I believe that stories of children, particularly of those who are lost, neglected or abused, articulate so much about our society, our fears and anxieties as a nation.*

Angela Betzien (2006)

Understanding the play and the production

Group Mind Map

Active Learning

Learning Objective: To understand *Hoods* using Mind Maps.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will develop an understanding of Mind Maps and how they can be used in all subjects.

Students will work together to discuss the play and the characters using a Mind Map.

Students will think about the focus and the structure of the play.

Materials: Black board, white board or chart paper, coloured chalk, markers, colouring pencils.

1. Explain the learning objective to the class. Discuss the concept of a Mind Map.

Mind Maps were popularised by Tony Buzan. A Mind Map is another approach to note-taking using a central idea which branches out words and images using different colours.

The central idea is placed in the middle of the page. Sub-headings branch off from this central idea in different colours using words or images or both. The new ideas are written on the branches each time. Branches then divide off from the sub-headings and so on until you have completed your ideas on the subject. The sub-headings can be interconnected.

Show students an example of a Mind Map for *Hoods*.

2. Remembering *Hoods* using a Mind Map.

In the centre of the board or paper write the title of the play. Ask the class to think about different sub-headings that can branch off from this central idea.

For example; Characters, Themes, Structure of the play, Language, Location of scenes, Production.

Write each of these sub-headings using a different colour and branching out from the central idea.

From the sub-headings ask the class to consider how these ideas can be broken down. (See sample in photocopiable section.)

3. Use the mind map sub-headings and questions in the thought bubbles on the following pages to support students in questioning the play and the production and in finding links with ideas and characters in the play.

**SPHE: Belonging and Integration
Influences and Decisions**

CSPE: The Individual and Citizenship

English: Personal, Social and Cultural Literacy

Mind Map – sub- headings ideas and questions:

Characters:

Who were the central characters in Hoods?
What was their relationship with one another?
How did they feel about one another?
Who were the Hoods?
What function did they have in the play?
What other characters were in the play?
Were the characters familiar or similar to characters from other stories/plays/films you have read or seen?

Production:

What type of set did Graffiti Theatre Company use?
What did it look like?
Why do you think the Designer made the set like that? What atmosphere did it create?
How many actors were in the play?
What was the effect of the soundscore? What atmosphere did it create?
What was the effect of the Lighting Design?

Language in the play:

What type of language is used in the play?
What effect does the rhyming have?
Is the language familiar?
Are there particular phrases you remember from the play?
Does the language help create the world of the play?

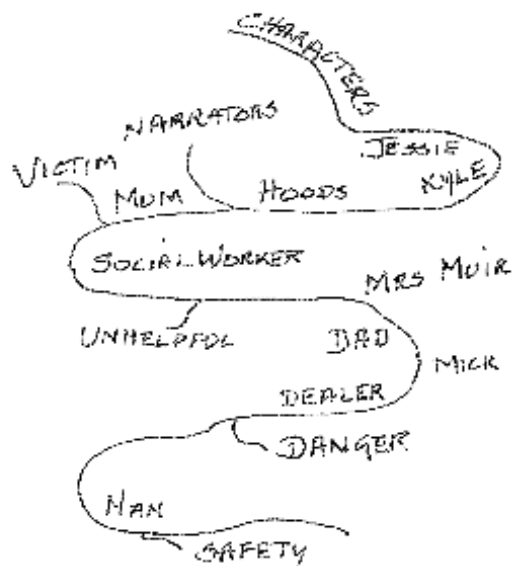
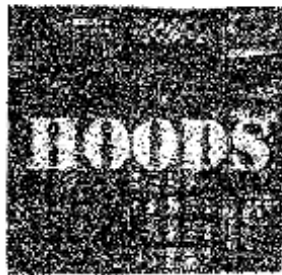
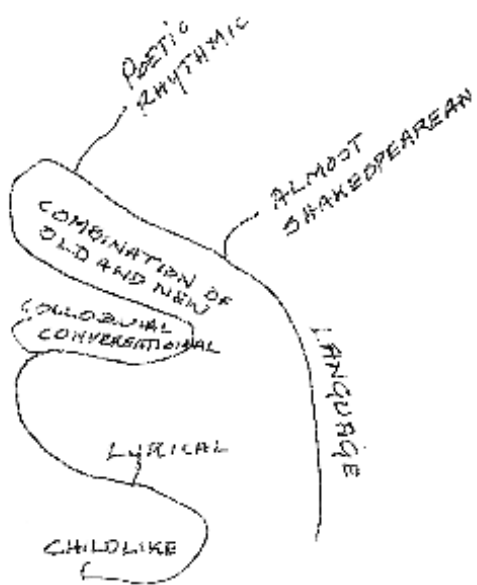
Structure of the play:

The Hoods act as a Chorus in the play. What information do the Chorus reveal?

Did other characters help to reveal information in the story?
What types of characters were shown in the play?

Were there key moments in the play?

What shape is the play? Does it have a clear ending to it or could everything begin again?



Understanding the play and the production

Role-on-the-Wall

Exploring the characters in *Hoods*

Learning Objective: To explore the characters in the play using a role-on-the-wall activity.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will think about the characters in the play using a role-on-the-wall activity.

Students will work together thinking about characters and feelings.

Students will think about how to construct characters for playwrighting, novels, short stories, essays.

Materials: Large sheets of paper, pencils, pens.

1. Explain the learning objective and an outline of the task to the group. Divide the group into five or six small groups depending on the size of the class. Ask each group to decide on the characters they would like to discuss or assign a character to different groups.
On a large sheet of paper students draw rough outlines of a body shape. Label each sheet of paper with a separate character's name, for example: Kyle, Jessie, Mr Mafeson, Mum, Social Worker. This activity can be used for the other characters too.
2. Inside the body outline write how the character feels about themselves - their inner feelings. Outside the body write how the character feels about other people and how other people view them. The role-on-the-wall questions can be used to help students consider different characters' thoughts and feelings.

Examples of role-on-the-wall activity and are given on pages: 9 & 10

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Role-on-the-wall

Useful questions to consider:

How would Kyle describe Jessie?

How would Jessis describe Kyle?

How would the Hoods describe Kyle and Jessie?

How would Kyle describe Mum?

How would Jessie describe Mr Mafeson?

How would the characters describe themselves?

Has their understanding of themselves changed over time? If so, why?

Small group reflection and discussion:

Did the group discover new ideas about the characters during this activity?

Could the group use this activity for writing about characters again?

How did the small groups decide on what feelings different characters had about themselves and each other?

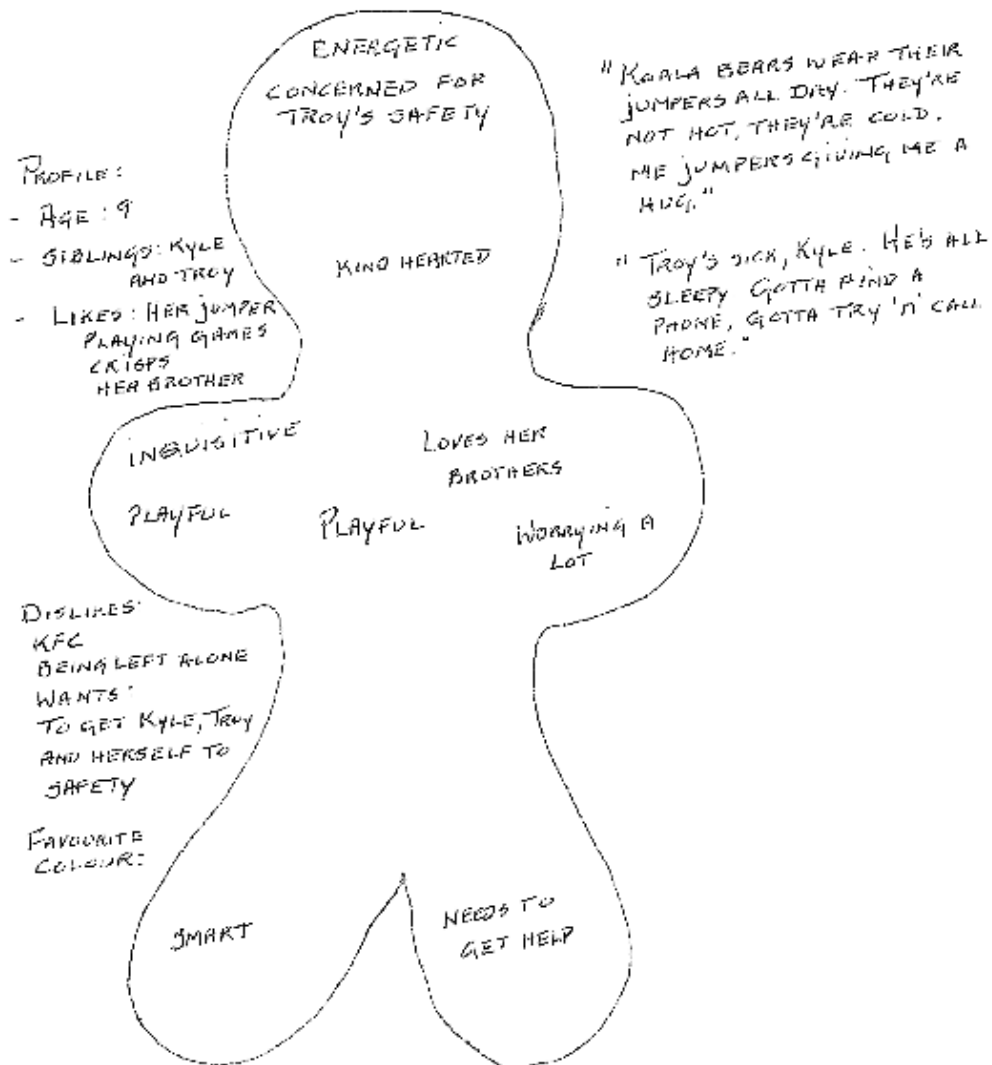
Use the adjectives you have collected to create a word bank for your writing.

Whole group reflection and discussion:

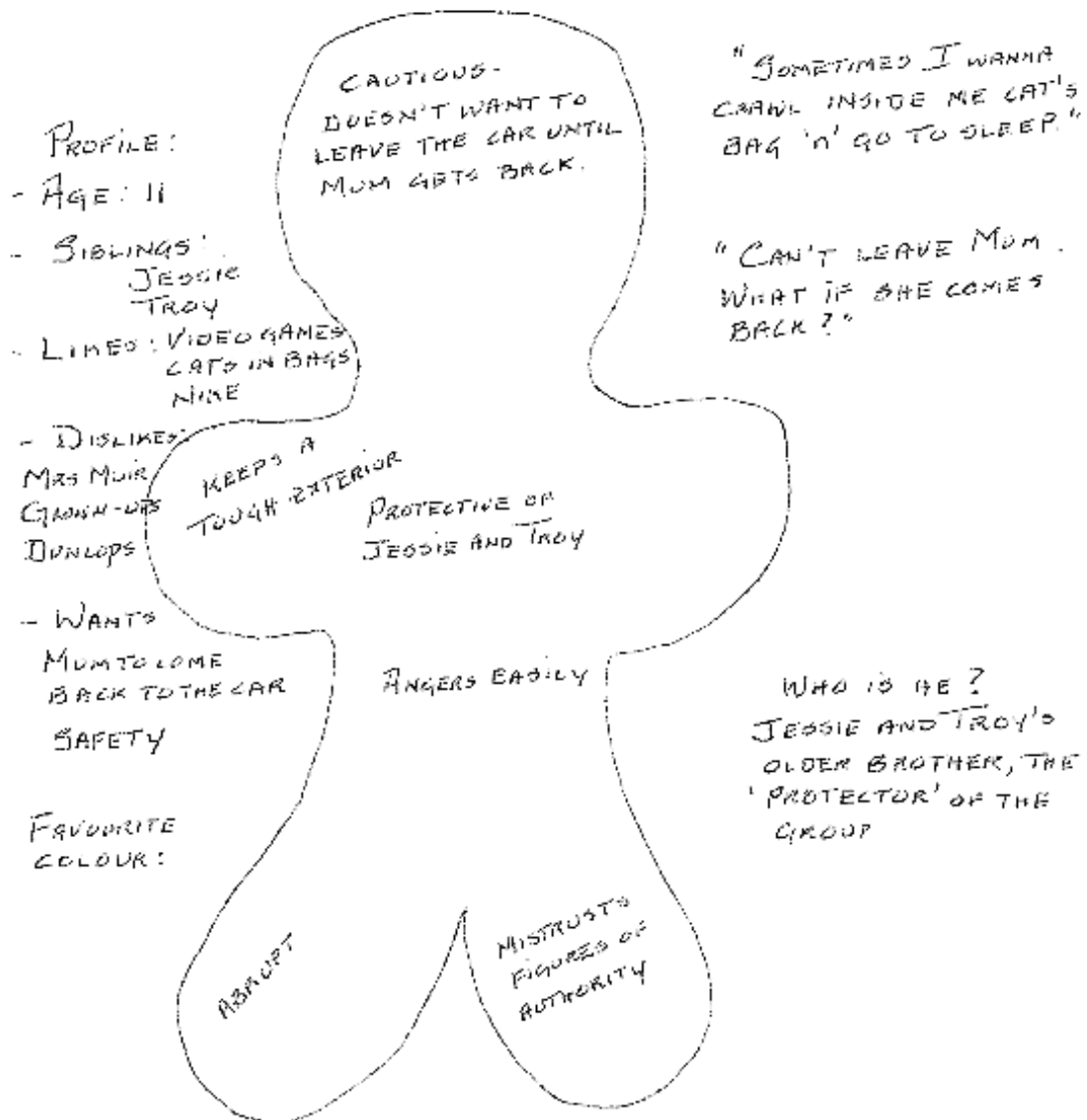
When the group has completed their character's role-on-the-wall ask the whole group to come together and discuss the ideas the groups had about the different characters.

Discuss any similar or different thoughts the groups had on the characters and why they had decided on these ideas.

JESSIE



KYLE



Understanding the play and the production

Hot-seating a character

Character analysis

Learning Objective: To develop questions to ask a character from the play. To speak in role as a character.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will think about the characters from the play and analyse how they might present themselves.

Students will consider different types of questioning and how to discover information about characters using a drama technique.

Students will think about how to construct characters for playwriting, novels, short stories, essays.

Materials: Paper, pencils, pens, ideas for questions hand-out, chair, material or a hat/hoodie to represent the character.

Teacher Note: In this activity it is possible for the group to choose to hot-seat the character of the Dad who dominates the home-life of the children. We strongly suggest that if this choice is made that YOU take the hot-seat. We feel that a young person could be too vulnerable in this role.

1. Explain the learning objective to the group. Explain that in groups students are going to develop questions to ask a character from the play. Decide as a class if you are going to focus on one character or a couple of characters from the play. Once the questions are completed the teacher could model going into role as the chosen character from the play and answering the questions in role as the character or a student could volunteer to try this. It is useful to wear a hat/scarf when in role to help create the character and important to de-role once the questioning is completed. You can de-role by taking away the hat/scarf and students can close their eyes and the teacher can explain that the questioning is finished we are back in school, back in our classroom.
2. Give students a copy of the 'Ideas for Questions' hand-out. Students choose one character from the play and consider questions they would like to ask that character to help develop a greater understanding of that character and their motivations/story. It might be useful to try this activity after completing the role on the wall activity in the Teacher Book as students would have considered a more detailed analysis of the characters in the play. This in turn could inform their questions and creation of a character in role.
3. Ask students to think about the character's imagined likes, dislikes, their relationships with other characters, consider what information those characters would present about themselves?
4. Once the students have developed their questions the students could work as a whole class and one student can go in role as the chosen character or a number of students could take on this role –

placing a hat/hoodie on themselves and speaking in role as a character. Alternatively, students could try this activity in small groups while the teacher observes and helps develop questions.

5. When the activity is completed use a de-role strategy. Then the discussion and reflection questions can be used with the class.

Small group discussion and reflection:

Did the students enjoy creating questions for the characters?

Was it easy to think of questions to ask the characters?

How did the students feel about speaking in role and answering questions in role as a character?

Would this be a useful tool to use when creating characters for stories, drama?

Whole group discussion and reflection:

As a group discuss the different questions that were asked. Which questions were most useful in finding out information about the character?

Would the students ask the questions differently if they tried this activity again?

Did the activity help to develop an insight into the characters?

Were there differences or similarities in the characters' answers to questions when different people took on the role of the chosen characters?

**SPHE: Belonging and Integrating
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CSPE: The Individual and Citizenship_
English: Personal, Social and Cultural Literacy**

Understanding the play and the production

Language focus

Understanding a text

Learning Objective: To think about the language used in *Hoods*.
To draw a response to the language and to perform the piece of text.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will reflect on the language used by the playwright in the play.

Students can create their own responses to the language through discussion and drawing.

Students will work together to perform the piece of text.

Students will think about how this device could be used for reflecting on and discussing language in poetry, plays and short stories.

Materials: Paper, section of text from *Hoods*, pencils, pens, musical instruments or music equipment.

1. Explain the learning objectives to the class. Read the piece of text aloud to the class, while listening ask the students to consider interesting words, phrases or rhyme schemes. What images strike you? Share any ideas with a partner and then as a whole class.
2. Read the piece of text aloud again. This time ask students to draw their response to the language in the poem. Share responses with their partner. Next explain that the students are going to have the opportunity to perform the piece of text.
3. Give students a copy of the text. In a small group consider how you would present this aloud. Explain that students can use gestures or actions, different voices, echoes, repetition, if possible students could use some musical instruments or play music as they speak the text.
4. Listen to the different groups presentations of the text. Discuss the differences and similarities in the presentations of the text. To extend this session students could write a response to the text or create their own organic rhyme poem/play.

Whole group discussion and reflection about the language in the play:

Did the students enjoy discussing the language that the playwright used?

Does the organic rhyme used by the playwright remind them of any other style or type of writing? For example: performance poetry or rap?

How did the students feel about drawing their response to the language? What type of drawings did people respond with?

Would this be a useful tool to use when developing their own writing for stories/poems?

Small group reflection and discussion:

Did the group discover new ideas about the language used in the play during this activity?

Could the group use this activity for responding to language in poetry or plays again?

How did the small groups feel about creating a performance for the text? What techniques or approaches did they use? Was music used?

What feedback did different groups give to each other? Would this feedback inform how you could approach performing a text in the future?

Influences and decisions_
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Language Focus

Text Sample

This piece of text is from HOODS by Angela Betzien, the Yellow Agency, Australia. Copyright: Real TV 2006.

Hoods: Two Hoods
A suburban train station.
Above us the constellations
spin and burn.
No tickets for we are ghosts of past present and future.
We sew structures
of time.
We are the game players
controllers
of fast forward pause and rewind.

Express train Eagle Junction to Beenleigh.
Keenly we board the loneliest carriage.
An old man mutters madness to multiple chins
Raving repent repent or burn for your sins.

Train shunts through the dark
slows to a
snail's
pace
past pylons thick with tagging
then speeds up screaming along its sharp silver splints.
The tags become a silent motion picture
like the handprints on ancient cave walls
trying to teach the illiterate
who obliterate their language.
Lights flicker on and off
breath stops.
For a second
time
is
suspended.

Understanding the play and the production

Newspaper report

Character analysis

Learning Objective: To think and write about how news is presented to us.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will write a newspaper report about a key moment in the play.

Students will think about how the news is presented to the audience. Students can choose to write in the style of a tabloid or a broadsheet newspaper. Students will consider how this will impact on the style and presentation of the story.

Materials: Paper, pencils, pens, copies of newspapers.

1. Explain the learning objective and the task to the group. In the play the Hoods act as the reporters of the news. They explain and provide information about what has happened in the story. Ask the students to think about how the news is presented to us. Is the news always truthful? Who reports the news?
2. Before beginning the activity review different types of newspapers. This could link with media studies. What are the differences between a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper? Research news reports – look at the news on different television stations. How is it reported? Look at different types of newspaper headlines – what draws your attention? Why? What types of language are the headlines using?
3. Imagine that you are a journalist. You have been asked to report on the discovery of two children and a baby in an abandoned car. Decide what newspaper you are writing for – either a tabloid or a broadsheet newspaper.
 - How will you report on the situation of the children?
 - How will you break the story?
 - What headlines will you use?
 - How will you present the characters?
 - Will you give a backstory to the recent events?
 - Will you interview any characters?
 - Will the writing be sensational or factual?
 - Who are your audience?
 - Who will read this report?

Will you use images or illustrations to highlight your story?

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Whole group discussion and reflection about character analysis using a newspaper report:

Did the students discover new facts or ideas about characters in the play through their newspaper report writing?

What style of news report did the class choose to write? Why?

Has this activity encouraged students to consider how the news/adverts are presented to the audience?

Would this be a useful tool to use when developing their own writing for stories/poems?

Small group reflection and discussion:

During this activity did the group consider how the news is reported to us and how the Hoods are used in the play?

Could the group use this activity for writing about a character?

How did the small groups approach writing the news report? What techniques or approaches did they use? How did they present their news report?

Whole group discussion and reflection about character analysis using a newspaper report:

Did the students discover new facts or ideas about characters in the play through their newspaper report writing?

What style of news report did the class choose to write? Why?

Has this activity encouraged students to consider how the news/adverts are presented to the audience?

Would this be a useful tool to use when developing their own writing for stories/poems? How?

Understanding the play and the production

Art Spiral - Reviewing the production

Writing a review

Learning Objective: To respond to the play by writing, drawing, writing a word on the large sheet of paper. To write a review of the production of *Hoods*.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will respond to the play and the production by writing, drawing on the large sheet of paper. Students will write a review of the production considering what they liked, disliked, what they would change or adapt in the production.

Materials: A large sheet of paper, paper, pencils, colouring pencils, pens, examples of reviews of films, books, music.

1. Explain the learning objective to the students. Explain that this activity will happen in two parts. Firstly, place a large sheet of paper on the ground. The paper should be large enough to enable students to walk around the paper and have space for all the students' responses.
2. Ask the students to think about the play they have seen. Talk to the person sitting/standing next to them about their own responses to the play. Ask students to either draw or write words or sentences that reflect their response to the play. They can write as large or as small as they like. Give students time to complete this activity. Then encourage students to move around and look and read other students' responses to the play.
3. Students can add more responses if they like to the art spiral. Ask students to consider if writing or drawing or reading other people's responses changed their ideas or feelings on the play? How did it feel if somebody else added to what they had written or drawn? (The next part of the session could take place immediately after or in a following lesson.)
4. Ask students if they read reviews before they go to see a film, a play, a concert? Or when they buy music, a book, a new product? Do they find reviews useful?

What type of information do they look for in a review?

A synopsis of the story?

An analysis of the production values – the set, costume, music, direction, acting in a film or a play?

Show the students examples of reviews for films, music or a book. Ask the students to think about the language used in the review. How would they describe it?

5.

Divide the students into pairs. Ask each pair to think about the production of *Hoods*. Give each group a copy of 'Helpful ideas for writing a review' (see page 20). Ask the students to write a short review of the play *Hoods*. Or if students prefer they could draw or make a poster or comic strip storyboard of their response to the production.

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Explain to the class that if they liked they could send their reviews or comments to Graffiti Theatre Company. Graffiti would be delighted to receive all responses to the *Hoods* programme.

Send to:

Graffiti Theatre Company

Graffiti Theatre

Assumption Road,

Blackpool,

Cork, Ireland

Email: <mailto:graffiti@eircom.net> Website: <http://www.graffiti.ie>

Understanding the play and the production

Art Spiral – Reviewing the production

Writing a review

Helpful ideas for writing a review:

Consider the whole production – Acting, direction, sound, music, costume, set design, props and lighting.

What aspects of the production did I enjoy?

Why did I enjoy these aspects?

How did the set design and lighting add to my understanding of the production?

Did the music add atmosphere? What music was used? When and how was music and sound used in the production?

Did the actors play multiple roles? How did this affect my understanding of the play?

What choices did the director make?

What parts of the production did I least enjoy? Why?

If I was to direct the play would I make any changes? Why?

Understanding the play and the production

Distinguishing between responses

Learning Objective: To distinguish & analyse different responses to an event or stimulus.
Learning Outcomes: Students will design to identify and distinguish between different responses.

Unpicking Responses.

1. Consider a statement or report which you feel will provoke a response from your class. It could be as simple as ‘The rich get richer and the poor get poorer’ or in response to HOODS or as complex as this Irish newspaper report.

2014 Dublin. Interview with a mother living in a car with her three children. Her house had been broken into and occupied.

Interviewer: *What you want the council to do now is put you on the homeless list, not on the housing list?*

Mother: *Yes, we'd probably be put in a hostel. Many families have to do that ... I don't get along with my family and at this stage, with three small kids, if there was anyone out there who would take me and my three small kids I'd gladly go with them.*

Interviewer: *Would you not rather go back to the house and try and make a home out of it just until you get it sorted rather than having three very young children living in a car?*

Mother: *Definitely not. The house was broken into. If you seen the pictures that I have you'd understand... my son would not go back to the house.*

Interviewer: *But what do your kids think about living in a car?*

Mother: *They're happy with their mother. They have me and that's all they'll ever have for the rest*

of their lives ... me.

Present this to the students.

2. Now ask the students to consider the following questions:

- **What are your emotional responses to this statement?**
- **What is your moral response to this statement?**
- **What are your beliefs about this statement?**
- **What further information, knowledge or facts do you feel you need to further understand the implications of this statement?**

Understanding the play and the production

Soundscape a scene/key moment

Using voice and sounds

Learning Objective: To create a soundscape for a scene or a key moment in the play <i>Hoods</i> .
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Learning Outcomes:

Students will design their own soundscapes in groups.

Students will think about how the soundscape contributes to the whole production.

Students will think about how to use their voices to work collaboratively to create a soundscape.

Materials: Synopsis of the play, paper, pencils, pens, video clip of the car advert.

1. Explain the learning objective to the class. Explain that the class are going to work in groups and use their voices to create a soundscape, like a soundtrack for a scene or a key moment in *Hoods*. Show the class the car advert used a few years ago for a famous car manufacturer where a choir uses their voices to create the movement of the car. This is available to watch on: [vimeo.com Honda Civic Choir TV ad \(UK\)](https://vimeo.com/HondaCivicChoirTVad). The advert will help to demonstrate the concept behind the soundscape.
2. Divide the class into small groups of 'Sound design teams'. Each team will work together to create a sound design concept for the play thinking about how best to create the atmosphere, the city, the key moment using voice/sounds. The class could work as a whole class team prior to beginning the voice work to consider the key moments and associated sounds. For example: creating the sounds of the car-park, the train, the shop, silence, etc.
3. When the groups have created their design concepts they can choose to present their work to the whole group if they like. Students could record their sound design concepts using ICT if possible in school. The class can reflect on the how the sounds were created and how this might inform how the play is viewed or presented. This could link with learning about media, film, advertising - where sounds and music are used to enhance feelings about products or emotions.

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Small group reflection and discussion:

What types of soundscapes were created by the group?
Did the groups use their voices or other resources?
Which was easier to use? Why?

How did the small groups approach creating the soundscape? What techniques or approaches did they use? How did they present their soundscape?

Did the group chose a key moment from the play ot create a general soundscape. If they chose a key moment, why? How did the sound add to it?

Whole group discussion and reflection about the soundscapes:

Would the groups try this type of activity again? Why/why not?

Has this activity encouraged students to consider how music and or voice can be used to create atmosphere?

In relation to the production what types of soundscapes were created?
How were these soundscapes created?

What impact did sound have on the overall production?

Why is sound/sound effects used in productions/plays/films/TV?

The Living Newspaper – A Possible Transition Year Project

The author of HOODS, Angela Betzien, and the company which first produced the play, Real TV, were inspired by the political theatre tradition of Living Newspaper.

Living Newspaper was first used in Russia and was a way of communicating news and issues of social interest to largely illiterate population.

During the Great Depression in the United States in the 1930's the government created many jobs in what was referred to as the Federal Theatre Project. Some of the jobs involved theatre companies, writers, designers, actors making productions out of issues of the day in the manner of Living Newspaper.

One of the most controversial and which indeed brought about the end of the project was actually play for children. It was called the Revolt of the Beavers and dealt with a strike. This was not acceptable to the funders.

In form, Living Newspaper productions are very free. They can incorporate song, dance, sound, digital images, whatever is necessary to create a vibrant piece of theatre which addresses an issue in contemporary Irish society.

We suggest you try the first step by using the following activity. You will then be able to judge if the activity has the potential to develop to a hard-hitting, pacy full production.

1. Split the class into small groups and ask them to choose a current news story or issue of concern in contemporary Irish Society. What might be a burning issue for them?
2. Using the ideas and techniques of living Newspaper (See Information page.25) ask the group to conceive and develop elements of piece of theatre which comments on and reports on their chosen issue.

If you decide it has potential for development to a full theatre piece bear the following in mind:

- In order to keep focus ask the students to articulate the intention of the piece being created, what exactly the issue is and what they want the audience to experience.
- In order to achieve this intention, encourage the students to improvise and try out ideas, always cross – referencing their intention.
- Students should consider where and when the play is set, whether it is to be performed in a naturalistic or stylised way (or both as in HOODS), how it begins and how it ends.
- Where students have seen HOODS they could be interested in adopting some of the conventions in the production – e.g., actors playing multiple roles, video-game conventions, a time structure which goes backwards and forwards, etc. However, remind students to keep focus on the story they are telling and not to get distracted by too many or too complicated production elements.
- Production tasks can be shared among the students, script – writing, choreography, design in its many forms, music, sound, lighting, stage management, etc.

Living Newspaper Techniques (Information Sheet for Teachers)

Research component: Find the factual base, facts, statistics, newspaper/media reports, interviews, etc.

Techniques: Quick scene and set changes

Actors playing multiple characters

Flexible stage space

Use of multimedia/digital imagery

Use of soundscores/music

Commentary on the action

Shadowplay

Abrupt changes in lighting states

Puppetry

Dance

Abrupt alternating viewpoints

The central impulse is always to keep the audience alert and aware.