

“MOBY DICK”

The John Godber Company Educational Resource Pack

“Moby Dick”

Moby Dick was published in 1851 and drew on the experience of author Herman Melville's experience as a sailor between the years 1841 and 1844. When *Moby Dick* was initially released its success was limited, however it later resurfaced in the mid 20th century and became one of the most important novels in American Literature. More relevant now than ever before with the relevance to popular documentaries such as *Seaspiracy*, *Moby Dick* made references to a drowned planet and a climate breakdown. The themes present within the novel include man vs. nature, revenge and teamwork and communication vs. dictatorship. The characters moved the book far beyond its years, for example the character of Queequeg is one of the first people of colour to be represented in a novel, alongside the multicultural crew of Native Americans, African Americans and Asians.

The first film based on *Moby Dick* was *The Sea Beast* (1926), films have both re-enacted and confronted the novel and themes. One of the most famous films related to the novel is *The Heart of the Sea* (2015) based on the sinking of the American whaling ship in Essex (1820) which inspired Herman Melville's novel.

Moby Dick is regarded by many as a masterpiece. It considers perspectives on man vs. nature, revenge and teamwork vs. dictatorship. *Moby Dick* was a basis for many well-known adventure stories, like *Jaws* and the character of Captain Hook from *Peter Pan*! The book has sold over 50 million copies, with an estimated 100 million people having read it to this date.

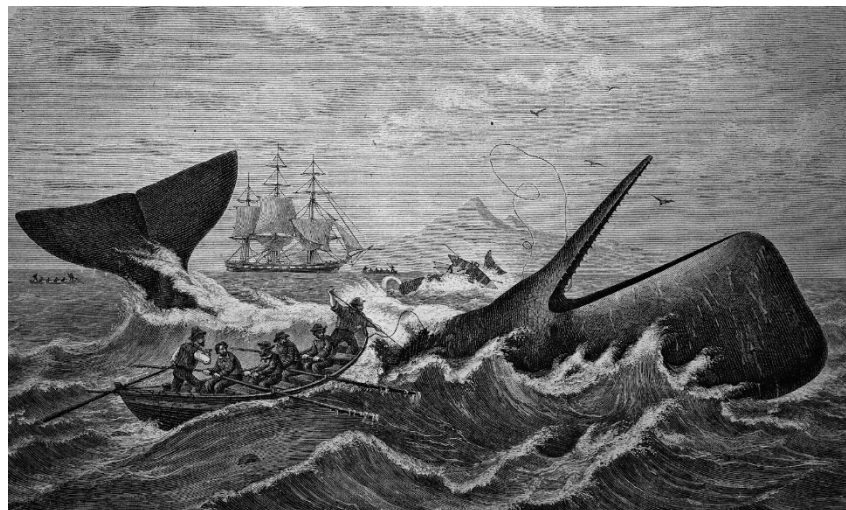
Reviews:

Of all the extraordinary books from the pen of Herman Melville this is out and out the most extraordinary. Who would have looked for philosophy in whales, or for poetry in blubber. Yet few books which professedly deal in metaphysics, or claim the parentage of the muses, contain as much true philosophy and as much genuine poetry as the tale of the *Pequod's* whaling expedition ...

-*London John Bull*, October 25, 1851

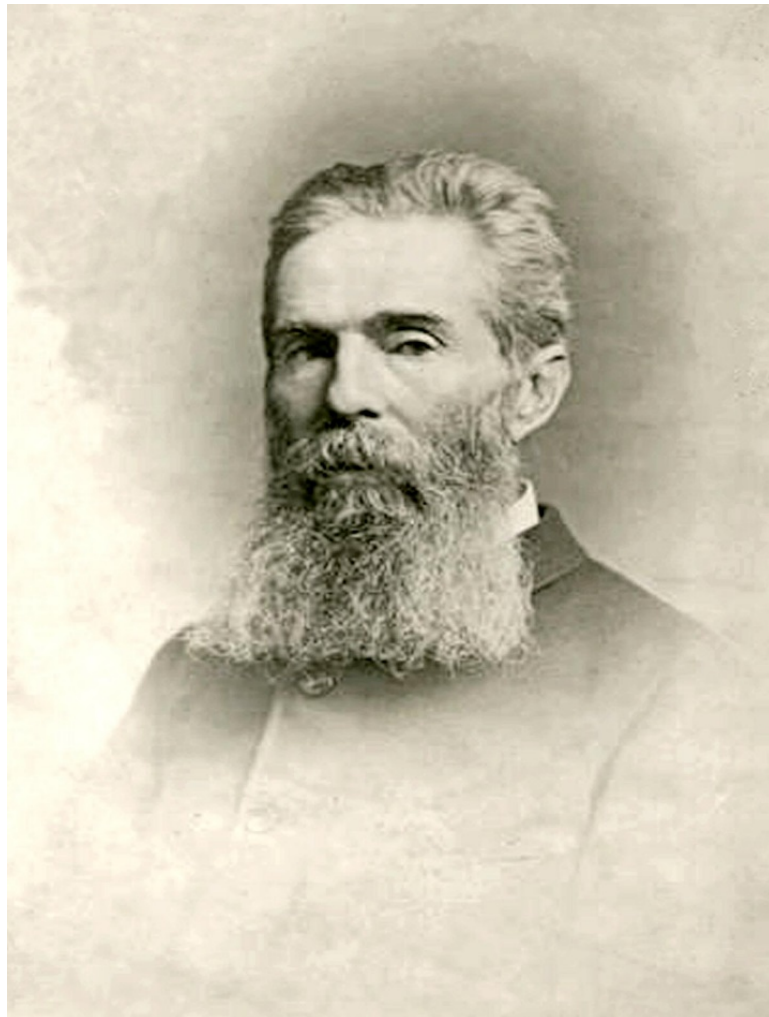
It is precisely *Moby-Dick's* forbidding reputation that has inspired artists, writers, performers and film-makers from Frank Stella to Jackson Pollock, Led Zeppelin to Laurie Anderson, Orson Welles, Sylvia Plath, Stanley Kubrick and Lynne Ramsay, as well as the makers of Tom and Jerry, and even The Simpsons.

Phillip Hoare - The Guardian, 30th July 2019



The Author

Herman Melville is the author of *Moby Dick*. Born in 1819 in New York, Melville began sailing in his teens and travelled the world on various ships, such as the *Lucy Ann* and the *Charles and Henry*, with various crews until 1850. Inspired by his travels, he released his first books *Typee* and *Omoo* in 1846 and 1847 respectively - which were received very well by the public. His following books were not. Even when *Moby Dick* was published in 1851, it sold only 3,000 copies before Melville died in 1891.



Plot Summary:

Moby Dick famously begins with the narratorial invocation “Call me Ishmael.” The [narrator](#), like his biblical counterpart, is an outcast. Ishmael, who turns to the sea for meaning, relays to the audience the final voyage of the *Pequod*, a whaling vessel. Amid a story of tribulation, beauty, and madness, the reader is introduced to a number of characters, many of whom have names with religious [resonance](#). The ship’s captain is [Ahab](#), who Ishmael and his friend [Queequeg](#) soon learn is losing his mind. [Starbuck](#), Ahab’s first-mate, recognises this problem too, and is the only one throughout the novel to voice his disapproval of Ahab’s increasingly obsessive behaviour. This nature of Ahab’s [obsession](#) is first revealed to Ishmael and Queequeg after the *Pequod*’s owners, Peleg and Bildad, explain to them that Ahab is still recovering from an encounter with a large [whale](#) that resulted in the loss of his leg. That whale’s name is Moby Dick. The *Pequod* sets sail, and the crew is soon informed that this journey will be unlike their other whaling missions: this time, despite the reluctance of Starbuck, Ahab intends to hunt and kill the beastly Moby Dick no matter the cost.

Ahab and the crew continue their eventful journey and encounter a number of obstacles along the way. Queequeg falls ill, which prompts a coffin to be built in anticipation of the worst. After he recovers, the coffin becomes a replacement lifeboat that eventually saves Ishmael’s life. Ahab receives a prophecy from a crew member informing him of his future death, which he ignores. Moby Dick is spotted and, over the course of three days, engages violently with Ahab and the *Pequod* until the whale destroys the ship, killing everyone except Ishmael. Ishmael survives by floating on Queequeg’s coffin until he is picked up by another ship, the *Rachel*. The novel consists of 135 chapters, in which narrative and essayistic portions intermingle, as well as an epilogue and front matter.

Jobs on the Ship:

Captain: Runs the ship, in charge of all crew mates.

Parson: Ordained Christian clergyman.

Cook: Responsible for feeding the entire crew throughout their journey.

Surgeon: The surgeon deals with any medical issues which occur on the ship, particularly illnesses and diseases related with being at sea.

Gunner: In charge of the armoury which defends the ship, including manning the canons.

Boatswain: Responsible for the upkeep of the sails, putting them up and down, and ensuring the ship is on the correct course.

Carpenter: Fixes all problems with the boat's structure.

Cabin Mate: Performs general duties for the crew, such as cleaning and maintenance.

Characters from the novel featured in the John Godber Company stage production:

Ishmael

The narrator, and a junior member of the crew of the *Pequod*. Ishmael doesn't play a major role in the events of the novel, but much of the narrative is taken up by his eloquent, verbose, and extravagant discourse on whales and whaling

Ahab

The egomaniacal captain of the *Pequod*. Ahab lost his leg to Moby Dick. He is single-minded in his pursuit of the whale, using a mixture of charisma and terror to persuade his crew to join him. As a captain, he is dictatorial but not unfair. At moments he shows a compassionate side, caring for the vulnerable Pip and musing on his wife and child back in Nantucket

Moby Dick

The great white sperm whale. Moby Dick, also referred to as the White Whale, is an infamous and dangerous threat to seamen, considered by Ahab the incarnation of evil and a fated nemesis.

Starbuck

The first mate of the *Pequod*. Starbuck questions Ahab's judgment, first in private and later in public. He is a Quaker who believes that Christianity offers a way to interpret the world around him, although he is not dogmatic or pushy about his beliefs. Starbuck acts as a conservative force against Ahab's mania.

Queequeg

Starbuck's skilled harpooner and Ishmael's best friend. Queequeg was once a prince from a South Sea island who stowed away on a whaling ship in search of adventure. He is a composite of elements of African, Polynesian, Islamic, Christian, and Native American cultures. He is brave and generous, and enables Ishmael to see that race has no bearing on a man's character.

Stubb

The second mate of the *Pequod*. Stubb, chiefly characterized by his mischievous good humor, is easygoing and popular. He proves a bit of a nihilist, always trusting in fate and refusing to assign too much significance to anything.

Flask

A native of Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard and the third mate of the *Pequod*. Short and stocky, Flask has a confrontational attitude and no reverence for anything. His stature has earned him the nickname "King-Post," because he resembles a certain type of short, square timber.

Pip

A young black boy who fills the role of a cabin boy or jester on the *Pequod*. Pip has a minimal role in the beginning of the narrative but becomes important when he goes insane after being left to drift alone in the sea for some time. Like the fools in Shakespeare's plays, he is half idiot and half prophet, often perceiving things that others don't.

Fedallah

A strange, "oriental" old Parsee (Persian) whom Ahab has brought on board unbeknownst to most of the crew. Fedallah has a very striking appearance: around his head is a turban made from his own hair. He is an almost supernaturally skilled hunter and also serves as a prophet to Ahab. Fedallah keeps his distance from the rest of the crew, who for their part view him with unease.

Peleg

A well-to-do retired whaler of Nantucket and a Quaker. As one of the principal owners of the *Pequod*, Peleg, along with Captain Bildad, takes care of hiring the crew. When the two are negotiating wages for Ishmael and Queequeg, Peleg plays the generous one, although his salary offer is not terribly impressive.

Bildad

Another well-to-do Quaker ex-whaler from Nantucket who owns a large share of the *Pequod*. Bildad is (or pretends to be) crustier than Peleg in negotiations over wages. Both men display a business sense and a bloodthirstiness unusual for Quakers, who are normally pacifists.

Captain Boomer

The jovial captain of the English whaling ship the *Samuel Enderby*.

Boomer lost his arm in an accident involving Moby Dick. Unlike Ahab,

Boomer is glad to have escaped with his life, and he sees further pursuit of

the whale as madness. He is a foil for Ahab, as the two men react in different ways to a similar experience.

Gabriel

A sailor aboard the *Jeroboam*. Part of a Shaker sect, Gabriel has prophesied that Moby Dick is the incarnation of the Shaker god and that any attempts to harm him will result in disaster. His prophecies have been borne out by the death of the *Jeroboam's* mate in a whale hunt and the plague that rages aboard the ship.

Workshop Ideas GCSE and BTEC

Warm Up Activity One

Themes Explored: Teamwork and communication, lots of people working together against one thing.

Beat the Boss: Everyone should grab a chair and put it anywhere in the room, all the chairs should face different ways. A volunteer is needed to be the boss and the boss's chair is taken away and put to the side. The aim of the game is for the boss to sit in an empty seat, everyone else must work together to stop the boss from getting a seat by moving onto other chairs. The boss must walk slowly towards an empty seat and those sat in chairs should move to fill the empty seat before the boss reaches it.

Warm Up Activity Two

Themes Explored: Conflict and Revenge, working against each other.

Cat and Mouse: Everyone should grab a chair and put it anywhere around the room, all the chairs should be facing different ways, there should be one less chair. Two volunteers to start, one is the Mouse and the other the Cat. The mouse should try and run to the empty chair before the cat tags them. If the cat tags them, they swap roles. After a few rounds- take the spare chair out and the mouse gets to budge another participant off their chair and they then become the mouse. Each participant only gets one budge, once they have used the budge they can say "budge off" to the mouse.

Physical Theatre

Activity one

Themes Explored: Teamwork and Communication, Whaling

10 Second Objects: Break off into small groups of 4 or 5, the aim of the task is to physicalise each item on this list, for example a washing machine. Countdown from Ten to Zero and during this time the groups physicalise the item with their bodies.

Washing Machine

Car

Clock

The sky

Ship

The Sea

Whale

Things to consider:

What does your item sound like? For example what would we hear if we were to make The Sea?

How does your item move? For example, how can you work together to make the whale move? How does it breathe? What pace does it move at?

Extension:

What would it look like if the whole group made each item together? For example, the whole class makes a whale.

One half of the class makes the item/object and the rest of the group direct them in making the item move and make sounds.

Complete the activity without using any words to communicate to each other, try making the items silently.

Discussion:

After making the components of the story of Moby Dick through physical theatre it would be good to discuss one of the themes within the novel - Man vs Nature.

In the novel the whalers battle against the elements to try and find Moby Dick. How different do you think the ships were in 1851 compared to now? What would the conditions be like?

What was the whaling industry like?

Compare this to how a ship would be now, would it look different if you made a ship from 1851 and one from 2021.

Hot Seating

Activity One

What's explored? Character development, understanding of character, Characters from Moby Dick.

Hot Seating a character: For this activity everyone should choose a character from the play Moby Dick, you can use the character list and play synopsis for this. Think about what you know about the character already.

Place a chair in the centre of the room, everyone makes an audience facing the chair. A volunteer gets up and enters the space and sits in the chair as the character. The audience then has the opportunity to ask some questions to the character in the hot seat and to find out more about their character.

Things to consider: How can you utilise asking questions to find out as much as you can. If you're in the hot seat and there's something you don't know how can you create answers that are still believable to the character.

Example Questions: What's your name?, What role do you have in the story? What's your role on the ship? Do you have any family? Where do you live? What's your job? Do you enjoy your job?

Consider the character's role in the novel and also where your hot seating is set.

Extension:

Set the hot seating up as a job interview or put a scenario on the top of it for example, it's the first meeting for the crew of the ship.

Still Image Activity one

What's explored? Image theatre, understanding Hull's involvement within the whaling industry.

Headlines- To explore newspaper headlines from Hull and its history within the trawler industry. Working in small groups each group will create a still image based upon the headline and then rotate around the three headlines so that each group creates three images, one for each headline. Then show these back to the rest of the group.

Newspaper Headlines

"Don't Give up hope" Hull families told - **The Daily Mail January 17th 1968**

"Third Trawler lost- 19 on board 'no Hope say the owners'- **The Daily Mail February 3rd, 1968**

Hull Trawler Blown Up. Skipper and one hand lost- **Hull Daily Mail September 7th 1914**

Extension:

Explore adding a thought track into each image

How can you make transitions between each image? Could this be through some movement or is there some dialogue that could piece these headlines together? Doing some more research into these might help too!

Discussion:

What can be seen in each group's images? What have they done that you may have not considered? Explore giving the group some feedback on their images and where to move next.

Thought Track Activity one

What's explored? Adding dialogue to images, character development

Thought track: For this activity you will need to create some images beforehand.

A thought track is often when a character steps away from a scene/image to tell the audience about how they're feeling. This can give the audience an insight into the character and help them understand the story more.

Using the images created, think about how your character might be feeling, they might be feeling something different to how they're presenting themselves to other characters. Take a few minutes to think of what your character might say and freeze in your image, one by one each character steps out and says their thought track.

Things to consider: Is your character revealing something that the other characters don't know?

How can you make sure that you are using both body language and facial expressions to help the delivery of your thought track.

Extension: Often from a thought track the characters may continue in the scene, how can you improvise something after the thought tracks and how has your thought track impacted how your character behaves.

Character Development

Activity One

What's explored? Character work, understanding the context of the novel.

Roll on the wall: For this activity you will need some paper and a pen and to choose a character from the list. If using a small piece of paper, draw the outline of a person on your page. You can also do this on a large roll of paper and draw around someone. Inside your drawing of a person write down everything you know about your character already, look at the play synopsis and character list to help you and fill in any gaps of knowledge about the character you may have. Below are some questions that you may want to think about when writing.

Things to consider:

Questions you may want to think about when writing your role on the wall:

How old is your character?

What's their gender?

Where were they born?

What is their social class?

What do they look like?

Do they have a job?, If so what's their role?

Do they work on the ship?

What family do they have?

How do they feel about their life at the moment? Are they happy? How can we tell this about the character?

Extension: Around the outside of the person write down how other people in the character's life may see them. For example, what do other people think of them? This might include their personality traits, what their position in society is and what they look like.

Physicalising the Character

Activity Two

What's explored? Characters from the novel, Image work

Moulding a character: This activity works best in pairs, once you've found a partner label yourselves A and B. Partner A is going to mould partner B into their character, use the character from the role on the wall. Try not to tell the rest of the class your character as they are going to guess at the end of this activity. Partner A can tell Partner B how their character stands, where their arms are, what their facial expression might be. You will get a couple of minutes to do this. Once you've moulded your partner into their character, we'll take a look at everyone's character one by one and try to guess who they are just from their body language and facial expressions alone.

Repeat this once everyone as shown back their characters, partner B then mould Partner A into their character.

Things to consider: Really try and focus on making the character as clear as possible, how can you show who they are without using any language.

Extension:

You might want to add a character thought track on top of the image or get the characters to move and walk across the room.

This one is quite tricky! - Try moulding your partner into their character but do not use any words at all, use your own body to convey what you're saying to your partner.

Working from a Piece of Text

Activity Three

What's explored? How this play is written, character work, a scene of conflict, drama skills, revenge

Acting out a Scene of Conflict: For this activity, the group should split into groups of 6, or even numbered groups if the group doesn't divide into 6. Each group picks one of the below scenes: both are examples from this version of Moby Dick, and both show two characters in a moment of conflict. Gender, age, etc. don't matter - you can select either character!

For this activity, go through the scene you've chosen together. To start, read through the context of the scene, work out what each character is doing in the scene and think about how you could show this. 2 people in each group will be acting out and performing the scene. Next, think about what can be seen around these characters. 2 people will be physicalising the set, the background characters, the objects, etc. Finally, think about what can be heard in this scene. 2 people will be creating a soundscape. Work separately on these three sections and then bring all of it together. Remember to consider timings and question where the focus is in the scene!

Things to consider:

Why is this a scene of conflict? How can this be shown in the way you physicalise and vocalise these characters?

If you're in the background, are you creating the ship, the set, other crewmates? Will you stay one thing throughout or will you change?

What sounds can be heard in this scene? Do they vary in how loud or quiet they are throughout the scene?

Extension:

When you've finished your scene with the acting, sounds and physicalisation, consider where the scene would go after this. Would the conflict be resolved, or would it escalate, or would it be just left? Improvise the next part of the scene, exploring the sounds and background and how this could impact it.

Scenes:

Scene One

AHAB Does t' noise o' my leg bother you Mr Stubb?

STUB Eh?

AHAB I said, does t' noise of my leg bother you?

STUB Not really I was...

AHAB Was what?

STUB It was just a joke Captain...

AHAB Do you think losing a limb's a joke?

STUB That's not what I'm saying...

AHAB So what are you saying?

STUB Your leg makes a bit of a noise Captain we all know that!

AHAB My leg makes a bit of a noise doest it?

Beat.

AHAB And all the crew are laughing at my leg are you?

Beat.

AHAB Because I can pad it, if it bothers you Mr Stubb!

STUB No, no it's rate honest...

AHAB I can soften the noise if it's getting to you!

STUB No it's rate....

AHAB Mr Stubb you may well know me better than any man on this deck, but I swear, if you ever mock me in that fashion again, I'll snap your neck like rotten wood. Do you understand me?

STUB 'Course I do!!

AHAB Do you understand me Second Mate Stubb?

STUB Yes Captain Ahab!

Context for this scene:

Flask, Stub, Ishmael and the rest of the ensemble are on the boat, out at sea. They are joking around before this scene, with Stub saying that Captain Ahab makes a 'bloody racket' when he walks around the ship because of his wooden leg. This is the first time we physically see Captain Ahab in the play. When he enters, it is to an 'ominous and sinister' beat and the mood clearly changes when he is around. Characters: Ahab and Stub.

Scene Two

STAR Captain Ahab, the oil in the hold is leaking, we will need to hold up a while and make repairs!

AHAB Repairs?

STAR Aye aye sir!

AHAB We're nearing Japan!

STAR Well we stand the risk of losing revenue sir!

AHAB Heave to here just to strengthen barrels Mr Starbuck?

STAR Either that, or waste in one day more than we make good in a year! What we've sailed twenty thousand miles to get is worth saving wouldn't you say Captain! It's pissing away down there!

AHAB Have the carpenter look at it.

STAR The carpenter is down there now doing what he can!

AHAB Then go and help him man!

STAR I fear he is losing the battle!

AHAB Then help him Mr Starbuck!

STAR Captain if we lose the oil what will the owners say?

AHAB I do not care!

STAR That's why we're here!

AHAB Let them stand on Nantucket dock and out-yell the Typhoons, how much money do they want? Have I not earned them enough already in this treacherous trade, with their mansions and their fancy wives?

STAR They have put their trust in you Captain, and so have the crew!

AHAB If you insist on lecturing me Mr Starbuck, then I shall remind you that the only true owner of anything is its commander! And that's me on this ship!

STAR I think we should try and understand each other a little better.

AHAB You better understand this, if you cross me again, I'll take this stick I hold up against and I will batter your bleeding brains in! There is one God who is Lord over the earth and one Captain that is Lord over the Peqoud.

Context for this scene:

Starbuck isn't on board with the fact that this is Ahab's revenge mission, from the very moment they leave the dock he is quietly against it. This scene is just after half way in the play and tensions are rising as the crew spend more time out at sea, with no sight of the infamous Moby Dick. Ahab is determined, Starbuck is irritated. Characters: Ahab and Star.

Technical Theatre

Activity Four

What's explored?: The making of a performance and how to stage a piece of drama

Set and Design: The play is spent for the majority on a ship. How can you use the things in your classroom to create a ship? Consider whether we're looking at the outside or the inside of the ship and how you can create the effect of being 'at sea'? This can be done in smaller groups or try some things out to an audience of your classmates to see what looks effective!

Props: As in most John Godber plays, the set is multi-functional. It can move and change. The same applies to props. In Moby Dick, there are wooden pallets and sticks which the ensemble use to make the set as they go. If you had to have all of your props on stage at all times, what impact might this have on a performance? Are there any other props you can think of which could be used to create multiple things, like the wooden sticks in Moby Dick making the ship?

Cast: This play is an ensemble piece - and everybody is on stage at all times. The audience can see actors change characters. How can you show character changes when you're always on stage? Experiment with switching between the characters from the character list - you could have someone else watch you so they can tell you what works.

Lighting: This is an outdoor show at Stage@TheDock. There are no theatre lights, so whatever come rain or shine, the lighting will be natural. What effect does lighting have on a performance? If you use bright, overhead lights, how does this look different to lighting a show with your phone torch?

Theatre Practitioners

When creating some of the work you might want to consider some practitioners and their techniques and utilise some of these within your work. The following practitioners are a part of the AQA GCSE Drama syllabus.

Bertolt Brecht

Bertolt Brecht was a playwright and was born in 1898 in the German town of Augsburg. Brecht was serving as a medical orderly in the First world war and was appalled by the effects of the war so he went to Munich and then to Berlin to pursue a career in the theatre industry. He moved to America after having his German citizenship revoked by the Nazis however shortly moved back to Europe just three years later. Brecht died in 1956 and by this time Brecht had established the Berliner Ensemble and was regarded as one of the greatest theatrical practitioners.

As an artist, Brecht was influenced by a diverse range of writers and practitioners including Chinese theatre and Karl Marx. The turmoil of the times through which Brecht lived gave him a strong political voice. The opposition he faced is testament to the fact that he had the courage to express his personal voice in the world of the theatre. He also had an original and inspired talent to bring out a dynamic theatrical style to express his views.

Brecht has impacted the way theatre is made and seen today after his ideas were so revolutionary they changed the theatrical landscape forever. Naturalistic theatre was at its highest in the early 20th century which acted as a mirror to what was happening in society. Brecht believed it was time for change, he wanted his audience to think and he famously said that theatre audiences at that time “hang up their brains with their hats in the cloakroom”. In naturalistic theatre the audience tend to care about the lives of the characters on stage and would often feel emotion towards them and forget about their own lives for a while. When an audience cries for a character or feels emotion, this is called catharsis. Brecht was against cathartic theatre and he believed that while the audience believed in the action on stage and became emotionally involved it meant they lost the ability to think and to judge. He wanted his audience to remain objective and distant from emotional involvement so they had a chance to make their own judgements and comments.

He did this by using a lot of techniques for example:

The ‘V’ effect- Is often also referred to as ‘alienating’. Brecht wanted his audience to remain interested and engaged so the message was not lost. If exploring/ creating a piece which has a political, social or moral message perhaps you want the audience to consider the meaning in a parable (a story with a wider moral message). You might want to explore a theme or issue and make your audience think about different viewpoints or sides to an argument.

Devices that use the 'V' Effect- The aim when using the 'V' effect is to ensure the audience are constantly reminded they are watching a piece of theatre.

Narration- Narration is used to remind the audience about what they are watching is a presentation. They might often tell a section of the story before it has even happened- this is a good way to ensure the audience does not become emotionally involved in the action.

Speaking the stage directions- This technique was used later on in Brecht's career and more common in rehearsal rather than the performance but it gave the chance for the actor to keep distanced from the character they will be portraying. In a performance it reminds the audience they are watching a live performance and forces them to study the actions of the performers.

Direct Address- Speaking directly to the audience breaks the fourth wall which destroys any illusion of reality within the performance.

The use of placards- A placard is a sign or additional piece of writing that is shown to the audience, often by an actor however can also be a form of multimedia. The writing helps enhance the performance and again breaks the reality of the performance.

Brechtian Staging

Multi-rolling- is when an actor plays more than one character onstage. The differences in character are often marked by a change in body language as well as costume but the audience can clearly see that the actor has taken on more than one role.

Split role- This is where more than one actor will play the same character. For example, the actor may change in each scene which could help show a change in time.

Minimal set/costume/props- The set, costume and props are often left simpler and representational. If this were different this would give a sense of theatre, was lost.

Symbolic props- This technique is used when one prop can be used for a lot of different things. A suitcase may also be used to become a desk, a door or a chair.

Lighting- Brecht wanted to keep lighting simple as he did not want the lighting to overshadow the message of the piece.

Other Brechtian devices

Song and Dance- The use of this technique helps remind the audience they are watching a performance however in Brechtian theatre the style of the music and the lyrics jar and do not fit together which helps distance the audience further.

Montage- A montage is a group of short scenes which are put straight after each other which juxtaposes and highlights the importance issues with absolute clarity. This is usually a short, fast and separate scene which allows time to focus on the minor details.

Gestus- Another Brechtian technique which is a clear character gesture or movement used by the actor that captures a moment or attitude rather than diving too much into emotion. This helps the characters to portray their emotions and helps the audience to understand more about the characters.

*These are just a few Brechtian techniques however more can be found on the BBC Bitesize website <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zwmvd2p/revision/1> *

Konstantin Stanislavski

Konstantin Stanislavski was a Russian practitioner whose ideas were very influential. Stanislavski's real name was Konstantin Sergeyeovich Alexeyev but adopted his stage name of Stanislavski in 1884. He was born in 1863 in Russia as a member of a very affluent family in Russia. He died in 1938 at the age of 75, his family loved theatre and Konstantin was able to join amateur dramatics as a boy.

He believed in naturalistic performances that were as close to reality as possible and created techniques that you can use to help with naturalistic performances. It is very easy to over-simplify the method in which Stanislavski created. The main thing to remember is the actors should try and inhabit the role they are playing. Not only should the actors know all their lines for the performance but also every minor detail of what that character would do and also what the character would also be like offstage.

He focused on creating Naturalistic theatre and these are some of his techniques:

Naturalism and Realism- The difference between the two can be difficult to work out. Realism was a 19th century theatrical movement, looking to portray real life on the stage. Stanislavski was an enthusiastic follower of realism throughout his working career. Naturalism is often referred to as the same thing however, it can also mean the belief that a human character is formed by what they have inherited from their family and their surroundings.

Realism in Theatre- These are a few of the important elements that you might expect to be present in a piece of realistic theatre.

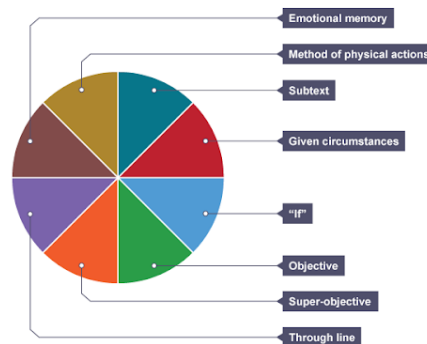
The fourth wall- The set of a realistic production will be solid three dimensional that enhances the sense of that fourth wall. The actors present the action realistically without using drama techniques such as addressing the audience or still image, which would immediately break the illusion of real life being played out.

Everyday conversations and style of speaking- A realistic performance would use prose rather than poetry and often use ordinary language, rather than the use of an emotional vocabulary.

Ordinary people- The stories are generally about people who are already defined as middle or working class.

Real settings- These plays would be set in realistic settings and would not be set in a fairytale or fantasy settings and are often likely to be contemporary performances.

The system- This technique focuses on helping an actor recall their emotions needed for a role. This technique isn't to be confused with 'method acting'. Method acting is how Stanislavski's work was interpreted by others.



Given circumstances- The given circumstances are the information you are given about the character. How old is the character? What is their situation in the play? What are their relationships with other characters? You may be given more information about the character in the stage directions- these are a starting point you will need to examine these to build a natural character.

Emotional memory- This is where the actor finds a real past experience where they felt a similar way to which the character would be feeling. They would then 'borrow' this emotion to help play the character.

Method of Physical actions- Imagine a simple activity like brushing your teeth for example, and then imagine a husband brushing his teeth whilst thinking about how to tell his wife he is having an affair. How does this situation affect such a simple action?

Subtext- The script of a play could be called the text. The subtext is what message is behind the lines that are spoken and what actions are taken. The delivery of the text is important and the actions taken cause it could create a different meaning depending on this.

IF- Also referred to as the 'magic if'. Stanislavski said that the character should answer the question 'what would I do if I was in this situation?'. This technique helps the actor to put themselves into the character's situation. This then helps the actor to create a naturalistic role.

*A really good resource to learn more about Stanislavskis techniques is <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zxn4mp3/revision/7> *

Year 5/6 Workshop Exercises

Warm Up Activity One

What's explored? Teamwork and communication, large group working together, the concept of the ship and being out at sea.

Walk the Plank: Everyone begins in the centre of the space. Before you begin the game, start with a practice run: read through each of the commands and practice the action that goes along with it. Once everybody remembers the actions, the game begins! The leader (teacher, or a nominated pupil) shouts out the command and everyone does the action that matches. You don't have to eliminate people - but if you want to make it more of a competition, anyone who does the wrong action or is too slow has to walk the plank (in other words, they're out of this round!).

Starboard! - Run to the left of the room

Portside! - Run to the right of the room

Bow! - Run to the front of the room

Stern! - Run to the back of the room

Down on the deck! - Everybody lies down flat on their stomachs

Captain's Coming! - Hand up in a salute and everybody says "Aye, Aye, Captain!"

Scrub the deck! - Pretend to clean the ship

Climb the rigging! - Pretend to climb up the rigging with your hands and feet

Man overboard! - Everybody says "Splash! Ouch!"

Stormy weather! - Rock side to side as if the water is really choppy

Warm Up Activity Two

What's explored? Communication, jobs on a ship.

Ship Jobs: Each job on the ship has a different action attached to it! The leader should give a practice run first so everybody remembers the actions (as in warm up one!), and then begin playing. The actions below are just a guide, you could change the actions, only do half of these jobs, or make up some of your own! It's like a game of Simon Says: if someone does the wrong action or is too slow, they're out!

Captain: Stood tall, one hand behind your back, the other in a salute. Say "Ahoy Sailors!"

Second in Command: Look out to sea with your imaginary telescope with both hands.

Cook: Stirring a big pot with a spoon.

Surgeon: Pair up with the person closest to you and pretend to listen to their heartbeat using an imaginary stethoscope.

Gunner: Light the fuse on your imaginary cannon and then shout "Boom!" as it goes off.

Boatswain: Pull on some imaginary ropes as if they're really heavy, looking up so you can see your sail going up.

Carpenter: Use your imaginary hammer to fix a plank of wood on the floor.

Cabin Mate: On your knees on the floor, scrubbing at the deck.

Physical Theatre Activity one

What's explored? Teamwork, Communication

10 Second Objects: Break off into small groups of 4 or 5. The aim of the task is to physicalise each item on this list with your bodies, for example, a washing machine. Countdown from Ten to Zero and during this time the groups physicalise the item with their bodies.

Objects:

Washing Machine

Car

Clock

The sky

Ship

The Sea

Whale

Things to consider:

What does your item sound like? Add in sounds to your object. For example what would we hear if we were to make the sea?

How does your item move? For example, how can you work together to make the whale move? How does it breathe? What pace does it move at?

Extension:

What would it look like if the whole group made each item together? For example, everybody in the class makes the whale together and makes it move.

One half of the class makes the object. Get the rest of the group to be directors: they give instructions on how the object moves and what sounds it should make and when.

Complete the activity without using any words to communicate to each other, try making the items silently.

Sound Activity one

What's explored? The setting of the novel, rhythm, teamwork and communication.

Making a soundscape: For this activity you'll need to clear the space and divide the class into small groups (4's or 5's work best). Put yourself into the role of the captain on the ship and you're far out to sea looking for a whale. Noises and sounds are really important when on a ship, and we're going to create a soundscape of these. This is an important tool for setting the scene!

You might need a paper and pen or whiteboard - something that you can write notes on. If you were the captain right now, what do you think you'd be able to hear out at sea? Note down all the noises you can think of. Share back with the group the noises that you have written down and each group should choose one sound, making sure that two are not the same. The groups must bring the noise to life. For example, if you have the sea what could this sound like? Would it be the noise of the waves and water, or would you be able to hear the water hitting the boat too, and the sounds of sea animals? Once each group has decided on a sound and practiced it a few times each group is going to start sharing their sounds, one by one and then layer over each sound. Try different levels of volume, does it maybe start quiet and get louder?

Things to consider: What sounds are good layered over each other? Could you start with one really quietly and slowly introduce each one? A soundscape works best if you keep trying the sounds in different orders and volumes until you find the right one.

Sounds to explore: The sea, the weather, the people of the ship, animals, noise that a travelling ship makes, distant sounds.

Extension: Some group members create the ship (from the physical theatre activity) and everyone else does the soundscape. Could there be actions for everyone to do during the soundscape? For example, moving during the sound of the waves.

Sound

Activity Two

What's explored? Rhythm, Music, Teamwork and Communication.

Sea Shanty: For this activity we're going to change the lyrics to a Sea Shanty. Sea shanties are folk songs which were traditionally sung between workers on ships in Britain and Europe whilst out at sea.

Underneath the activity is a copy of the lyrics and a Youtube link to a popular sea shanty called Wellerman. This song has recently gone viral! It will also be sung as part of the John Godber adaptation of Moby Dick! It would be useful to share the lyrics with the class and watch the Youtube video together. This activity can be done as a whole group and the class can change the lyrics together, or in smaller groups with a verse and chorus each. Not every line has to be changed but sea shanties are traditional so therefore contain older vocabulary. The class could update the vocabulary to more modern words, or update the lyrics so they're about modern day whaling, what it would be like to be on a ship and maybe even include some links to the sounds of being on the ship.

Things to consider: How could this be performed? Think about where the audience might be or if you want them to join in.

Could you add actions to go with the lyrics?

Extension: A more challenging task would be to completely make up your own sea shanty - take inspiration from the video and lyrics and come up with your own. Create a rhythm and the lyrics and perform this back!

Lyrics to Wellerman - Sea Shanty

There once was a ship that put to sea
The name of the ship was the Billy of Tea
The winds blew up, her bow dipped down
Oh blow, my bully boys, blow (huh)

Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
One day, when the tonguing is done
We'll take our leave and go

She'd not been two weeks from shore
When down on her a right whale bore
The captain called all hands and swore
He'd take that whale in tow (huh)

Soon may the Wellerman come
To bring us sugar and tea and rum
One day, when the tonguing is done
We'll take our leave and go

Da-da-da-da-da

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da

YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP-7GNoDJ5c>

Characterisation Activity One:

Pirate Ship Role Call

What's explored?: Characterisation, acting, performance skills

You can start off this exercise by asking the group what jobs they think there would be on a pirate ship? Write out a list of jobs and work out how many of each role there would be on the ship, who would do each role? Back when Moby Dick was set, women wouldn't have been allowed on the boat, so what jobs could they do - or could we make new ones for them? If you run low on ideas, there's a couple you will have seen in warm up activity 2.

Everyone should pick a job they are going to do on the ship. Remember how many of each role there is, maybe everybody could vote on who their captain should be? Then we are going to form a line down the centre of the room. Each person is going to report for duty on the pirate ship - whatever your pirate ship is going to be called. They just have to get past the boats' guard. To do this, they must say their pirate name, their age and their job on the ship. If the boats' guard is satisfied with their answer, they can go past and start working. This could be starting on another exercise or they could mime doing their jobs while they wait for everyone to get on the ship!

Things to consider: What is your pirate name? What's your story? Why are you getting on this ship?

What kind of character are you? If you had to sum your character up in one word, what would that word be?

Think about how your character stands, walks, talks and interacts with other people. Do they have an eyepatch or a hook for a hand like Captain Hook? How old are they?

Do you like your job? Are you excited to be on the ship? How can you show this?

