

**theatre
Royal
Wakefield**

**John
Godber**
COMPANY

EDUCATION PACK

TEACHERS

BY JOHN GODBER



LOTTERY FUNDED

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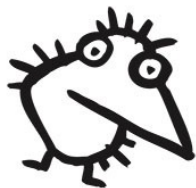
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INTRODUCTION

This Education Pack for ***Teechers*** by John Godber was developed alongside the current (2013/14) **John Godber Company** and **Theatre Royal Wakefield** co-production. The pack is designed primarily to support teachers and students exploring the text practically; it contains workshop activities and notes on performing the text.

The pack also contains notes and documentation on the current production which will be useful for groups who are planning to see the show, opening at **Theatre Royal Wakefield** (The home venue of **John Godber Company**) from 11 to 14 September 2013 then touring nationally.



The pack directly addresses key skills that students studying GCSE Drama (EDEXCEL) will be expected to demonstrate, although these skills are relevant to anyone with an interest in performance.

Look for the image on the left throughout the *Teechers Education Pack* to see how you can address specific units of the GCSE Drama specification (EDEXCEL)

This Education Pack was created for Theatre Royal Wakefield and John Godber Company by Gavin Leonard with additional material by Jane Godber, Hannah Chissick and Rhiannon Ellis. Photo credits: Amy Charles and Studio 2.

THEATRE ROYAL WAKEFIELD // 11 - 14 Sept
01924 211311 www.theatreroyalwakefield.co.uk

HARROGATE THEATRE // 24 - 28 Sept
01423 502 116 www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

CHESTERFIELD POMEGRANATE THEATRE // 30 Sept & 1 Oct
01246 345 222 www.chesterfieldtheatres.co.uk

EDGEHILL UNIVERSITY ARTS CENTRE // 2 Oct
01695 584480 www.edgehill.ac.uk/artscentre

BUXTON OPERA HOUSE // 3 - 5 Oct
0845 127 2190 www.buxtonoperahouse.org.uk

POOLE LIGHTHOUSE // 7 - 9 Oct
0844 406 8666 www.lighthousepoole.co.uk

ASHCROFT THEATRE CROYDON // 10 - 12 Oct
020 8688 9291 www.fairfield.co.uk

CREWE LYCEUM THEATRE // 28 - 30 Oct
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THEATR HAFREN // 1 Nov
01686 614555 www.thehafren.co.uk

LAKESIDE ARTS CENTRE // 4 - 6 Nov
0115 846 7777 www.lakesidearts.org.uk

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01539 725133 www.breweryarts.co.uk

DEVONSHIRE PARK THEATRE, EASTBOURNE // 11 - 13 Nov
01323 412000 www.eastbournetheatres.co.uk

GEORGIAN THEATRE ROYAL, RICHMOND // 15 & 16 Nov
01748 825252 www.georgiantheatreroyal.co.uk

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01422 351158 www.victoriatheatre.co.uk

ABERYSTWYTH ARTS CENTRE // 20 Nov
01970 623232 www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk

HELMSLEY ARTS CENTRE // 22 Nov
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DERBY THEATRE // 26 - 30 Nov
01332 59 39 39 www.derbytheatre.co.uk

SYNOPSIS:

FORM & STRUCTURE



EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to live performance

Salty, Gail and Hobby have finished high school and are staging an end-of-year play about their school and their beloved drama teacher, Mr Harrison.

In this play-within-a-play “The names and the faces have been changed...to protect the innocent” and Salty, Gail and Hobby will be playing the parts of all of the teachers, the students and caretakers themselves, “So you’ll have to concentrate”.

The three students also act as narrators throughout their play, directly addressing the audience and leaving us in no doubt that what we are watching is a ‘performance’.





CHARACTERS IN TEECHERS

- **Ian 'Salty' Salt:** Disillusioned by school life until Mr Harrison turns up, Salty lives on an estate where he is exposed to high levels of unemployment. (See Pg.5-7,46-48,57,58)
- **Lillian 'Hobby' Hobson:** Hates school, drama and teachers, often skips class, slowly won over by Mr Harrison (Pg.16-18,39-42,47-49)
- **Gail Saunders:** The most enthusiastic of the three students, Oggy Moxon fancies her, she has a huge crush on Mr Harrison/ Nixon (Pg.25-27,39-43,48-49)
- **Mr Harrison:** An inspiring drama teacher, re-named Mr Nixon in the student's play (See Mr Nixon)
- **Mrs Hudson:** The headmistress, called Mrs Parry in the student's play (Pg.5-6)

CHARACTERS WITHIN GAIL, HOBBY AND SALTY'S PLAY

- **Jeff 'Niko' Nixon:** New drama teacher, idealistic, initially enthusiastic but becomes worn down by the system (Pg.14-19,25-31, 34-36, 43-46, 54-56)
- **Mrs Cordelia Parry:** The Head Mistress, an eccentric with an enthusiasm for the arts (Pg.10-12,49-51)
- **Mr Derek Basford:** The Deputy Head, an authoritarian (Pg.10,34-36,52-56,60)
- **Bobby "Oggy" Moxon:** The school bully, (Pg. 23-25,29-31,42-44,56)



- **Miss Jackie Prime/Short:** PE teacher that Nixon becomes infatuated with (Pg. 20-22, 24,25,55,58)
- **Ms Maureen Whitham:** Harassed teacher, unable to control her class (Pg. 15,16, 22, 23,36,37,45,58)
- **Mr Dean "Deanie":** A History teacher, bad dancer (Pg.23,41)
- **Doug:** The caretaker with little enthusiasm for drama, a jobs-worth (Pg.32,33,51)
- **Ms Jones:** A dejected teacher (Pg.22,23,58)



OTHER CHARACTERS

- **Dennis:** Oggy Moxon's side-kick (Pg.29,30)
- **Pete Saxon:** Huge, tattooed student (Pg.19)
- **Simon 'Piggy' Patterson:** Always running, tells on other students (Pg.9,28)
- **Barry Wobschall:** A small boy who never brings his PE kit (Pg.27,28)
- **Ron:** Never brings his PE kit (Pg.38)
- **Mrs Clifton:** Governor at Saint George's (Pg.53)
- **Mrs Coates:** Head at Saint George's (Pg.53)
- **Mr Fisher:** Head of PE at Whitewall
- **Mr Hatton:** Helps with the Christmas dance (Pg.40)

The page numbers given for each character are not their only appearances in *Teachers* but they do highlight some of the characters' key moments. All page references throughout this education pack are taken from:

Godber, J; (2001) *Plays:2*; Methuen Drama; ISBN: 978-0-413-75820-0

FULL SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

A Stage in a School Hall (Pg. 5-8) Salty, Gail and Hobby introduce their play. They tell us they are leaving school and that they have made a play about their experiences, that they have been inspired by their new drama teacher, Mr Harrison.

The School Corridors (Pg.8-10) We meet Mr Nixon (as Mr Harrison is called in the play-within-a-play) a newly qualified drama teacher on his first day at Whitewall High School, a comprehensive school in a special priority area with no drama facilities.

Mrs Parry's Office/ The School Corridors (Pg. 10-12) Nixon meets the School Head, Mrs Parry. Parry has a passion for theatre and persuades Nixon to join the cast for her Gilbert and Sullivan Society production of *The Mikado*.

A Form Room/ The Main Hall (Pg.13-20) We are introduced to the students in form 7YY and hear how they saw off three tutors in a week. We see the difference between Mrs Whitham's inability to control her class and Mr Basford's students working in silence. Nixon meets his drama class and they get on well.

The Staff Room (Pg 20-23) We get an introduction to the teachers at Whitewall, the hierarchy and the teachers attitude to each other and the students. Nixon begins an infatuation with the PE teacher, Jackie Prime.

Behind the Sports Hall (Pg. 23-25) We meet school bully Oggy Moxon who is 'untouchable'. Oggy invites Gail to a party in his Dad's pub.

A Classroom/ Mr Basford's Office/ The Gymnasium (Pg. 25-29) Nixon gets in to trouble with the Deputy Head, Mr Basford for taking a school trip to see *The Rocky Horror Show*. It brings Nixon closer to his students but Basford demonstrates his grudge against Nixon by adding him to the cover rota.

Saint George's School (Pg. 29) Nixon attends a GCSE meeting with Jackie Prime at the nearby Saint George's school. The school has an excellent reputation and modern facilities and Nixon considers the difference between this school and Whitewall.

Behind the Sports Hall (Pg. 29-32) Nixon catches Oggy Moxon charging younger students for a look at his dad's 'dirty magazines'. Nixon threatens to report Oggy but realises the boy has free reign at the school. Nixon walks away, humiliated by the confrontation.

The School Hall (Pg. 32-34) Nixon starts an after-school 'drama club' which causes a run-in with Doug, the school caretaker, who is annoyed that he can't buff the floor in the school hall because the club are using the space. Doug makes it clear that he thinks drama is 'not worth doing'.

Basford's Office/ The Staff Room/ A Classroom (Pg. 34-38) Nixon's relationship with Basford continues to deteriorate. Nixon questions why Basford sends his children to Saint George's when they live in the catchment area for Whitewall. At the end of Act One, Nixon finds out that there is a job opening for a drama teacher at Saint George's as his enthusiasm for the job at Whitewall starts to disappear.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

The School Hall (Pg.39-43) Christmas. Gail plans to kiss Nixon at the school disco. The girls get drunk on cider and then eat spring onions to cover the smell of alcohol on their breath. Oggy tries to steal a kiss from Gail before starting a fight in the toilets. Nixon has been drinking and ends up dancing with Gail and volunteers to give her a lift home.

The Car Park (Pg. 43-45) As Nixon and Gail get in to the car, Oggy jumps in to the back. Nixon and Oggy argue and Nixon hits Oggy in the face, breaking his nose. Oggy runs off, threatening revenge on Nixon.

The Staff Room/ Nixon's Bedsit/ The School Hall (Pg. 45-49) We find out that Jackie Prime gets married to the PE teacher at Saint George's over Christmas. Nixon applies for the drama job at Saint George's and starts to lose his enthusiasm for teaching at Whitewall. The children however are relishing the opportunity to use their imagination in drama as we see in their 'ninja play'.

Mrs Parry's Office/ The School Hall/ St. George's School (Pg. 49-54) Miss Parry's *Mikado* rehearsals start; Nixon's references are taken up by Saint George's and his interview goes very well.

The Tennis Courts (Pg. 54-56) Basford organises a teachers' tennis tournament and ends up facing Nixon in the final. Nixon wins, sending Basford away furious and embarrassed; Nixon also finally asserts his authority over Oggy Moxon.

Mrs Parry's Office (Pg.57-58) Salty get's called into Mrs Parry's office and explains how he is fed up with the idea of leaving school, that Nixon has inspired him and that he feels that no one in the outside world cares what happens to him.

The Staff Room/ The School Hall (Pg. 58-61) Miss Parry's *Mikado* is a success and Nixon gets the job at Saint George's.

A Stage in a School Hall (Pg 61,62)

Salty, Gail and Hobby's play-within-a-play finishes and, from the stage, they address Mr Harrison, begging him to stay and not go to 'that snob school'.

End.



'TEACHERS' IN CONTEXT

When *Teechers* was written, John Godber had already had a large amount of success with productions of his plays, including *Bouncers*, *Happy Jack* and *Shakers*, at the National Student Drama Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. He had recently left his job as the Head of Drama at Minsthorpe Community School to take the job of Artistic Director at Hull Truck Theatre Company.

The world in the late 1980s was very different to how we live now and yet there are some striking similarities:

Mid-to-Late 80s:

- Conservative leader **Margaret Thatcher** won her third term as Prime Minister. She had suggested in the run up to the 1987 election that state schools (like Whitewall High School from *Teechers*) may soon start charging pupils fees to attend.
- **Privatisation** was rife as the Conservative government sold off public services such as British Gas, British Steel, British Telecom and British Airways to private investors to raise funds to try to help clear the huge national debt.
- **Unemployment** in the UK rose from roughly 1 million people under the previous Labour government, to a high point of over 3.5 million unemployed under the Conservative government of the 1980s.
- **Miners' strikes** began as the government threatened pit closures. This resulted in high levels of poverty in areas where mining was one of the main industries (Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, Newcastle, Nottinghamshire)
- Madonna, Michael Jackson and Pet Shop Boys had Number one singles. The 'Acid House' and 'Rave' youth cultures begin to emerge.

Discussion Topic

What are the differences and similarities between life in the late-eighties and life now?

KEY DRAMA TECHNIQUES

Brecht

Godber often references the dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) as a key influence. Some of the techniques mentioned on the next page borrow elements of Brecht's ideas of

Verfremdungseffekt

Verfremdungseffekt is sometimes called the V-effect. It is sometimes translated as the Distancing effect or the A(lienation)-effect. It means 'to make the familiar strange or unfamiliar'.

Brecht theorised that audiences should be constantly aware they are watching a performance. This was in order to encourage audiences to be more aware of the issues within the performance, rather than passively watching the story unfold.

Brecht felt this trap of the 'passive' audience was one of the detrimental effects of Stanislavski-influenced 'Fourth-wall' naturalism.

Brecht felt that by 'making strange' the action on stage, audiences would think about how the situations that were presented on stage could be altered, and so think about how they could make their own world different.

Some of the ways that Brecht would 'make strange' the action:

- **Having music performed by musicians on stage**
- **Use of narration and direct address**
- **Non-naturalistic set**
- **Placards and projections announcing the action on stage**

Discussion Topic

What do we know about the use of costume, set/ props and performance styles in *Teachers* that demonstrates Godber's use of Verfremdungseffekt?

Can you give specific examples from the text?



Characterisation One

Role on the Wall: A technique used during rehearsals to make notes on specific characters

Activity

You can make your own role on the wall diagram by getting a large piece of paper and drawing around one of your friends.

Select a character from the play.

Using the character descriptions and full synopsis in this pack, together with your own knowledge of the play and a script, fill in the outline with notes on your selected character.

Things to consider when making your Role on the Wall:

What is the character's gender?

How old are they?

What physical descriptions are given in the play?

What is their social class?

What is their status among their classmates/ colleagues?

Are they happy with their social class/ status?

How do they feel about their environment (their workplace/ school/ home life)?

What can we tell about this character from the language that they use?

Does this character have any enemies/ allies in the play?

Discussion

Find out if anyone else in your group has looked at the same character. Compare your notes.

Have they made any notes that you haven't?

Did they miss something that you picked up on?

Are there any points that you disagree on?

How did you come to these conclusions?



Characterisation Two

Movement and Gesture: How a performer can physically portray their character

Activity

Start to walk about the room, trying to move in to empty spaces (and avoiding bumping in to other people!) Think about one of the characters from *Teechers*.

Imagine your character is in the school corridors, on the way to their next lesson.

Think about the '**Role on the Wall**' resources you created for **Characterisation One**. Using what you know about the characters, think about:

- their **Body Language**
- the **Gestures** they may use
- how they might **Move** around a space.

Things to consider:

A very busy or stressed character may move quickly and with urgency

A character that is relaxed, tired or unenthusiastic will move much slower

An older character or someone with an injury etc may have more difficulty moving

A more confident/ higher status character will often have a more 'open' body language than a less confident character.

Open

Chest and shoulders out

Straight back

Head up, eye contact

Closed

Chest and shoulders in

Hunched over

Head down, avoids eye contact

During this activity, find moments where you come to a stop. Think about how you can use this moment of stillness to best show the physicality of your character.

Imagine you are performing this still image to someone at the other side of a football pitch. How exaggerated would your physicality need to be?

Take a moment to step out of the exercise and observe other people.

Can you tell which characters other people are portraying?

Discussion

Make a small group with people who have developed different characters from yourself.

Share your work with them, teach them how your character moves and explain your decisions.

Ask them what they would have done differently with your character.



Characterisation Three

Multi Role Playing: A technique used regularly by John Godber (and many others!) to allow a small cast to play a large number of characters.

Activity

Teechers is written in such a way that it can be performed by a cast of anything from 3-16 performers. If performed by 3, each of the actors will have to perform multiple characters, changing very quickly between characters.

- The group should form a circle.
- One player starts with a ball (you could also pass/catch a clap or finger-click).
- Make **eye contact** with someone else in the circle and, when they return your eye contact, throw the ball to them.
- As you throw the ball, **shout the name of one of the characters** from *Teechers*.
- Once the catcher has caught the ball, they should **freeze in an image of the character** (think back to the **Characterisation Two** exercise).
- Mark the moment by holding the freeze for a few seconds and then repeat, making sure everyone in the circle gets the ball.
- Can you work in smaller groups? The less people in the circle, the more often you will have to change character.
- Once the group are confident with this exercise, you can add multiple balls to the exercise. Remember that eye contact is very important in this activity.
- If the group can confidently carry out this exercise, think about moving out of the circle and playing the game as you move freely about the space.
- It may help once you open out in to the space to reduce the number of balls back down to one initially.
- Can you maintain the character as you move around the space? Can you add a line of dialogue once you've caught the ball? This dialogue could be either from the script or 'in character'.

Discussion

What is the level of exaggeration needed to make the change in character clear?

What methods other than use of gesture and body language could you use to show the change between characters?



Explorative Strategies

Hot Seating: A technique to encourage performers to explore their character in-depth and improvise in-role.

Activity

- Working in pairs, choose a character from *Teechers*.
- Imagine that they have gone to an interview; maybe they have an interview for a job, maybe they have been called in to Mrs Parry's office, maybe they are being interviewed by the police or are at the job centre.
- Try to imagine an interviewer who the character may meet in the outside world.
- As the interviewer, think of five questions that you might ask them.

Possible scenarios and questions:

Nixon is at his interview at Saint George's

Q. *Why do you want to work here?*

Q. *Why do you want to leave your current job?*

Q. *What makes you a good teacher?*

Oggy Moxon has been called into Mrs Parry's office

Q. *Why have you been bullying other students?*

Q. *What are you going to do when you leave school?*

Q. *What's your relationship with your dad like?*

Take it in turns to be the interviewer/ interviewee.

Stay in character and answer the questions as the character would answer them.

Try the activity with different characters.

Discussion

After the activity, discuss your responses with your partner.

Do you think they were true to the character?

Do you think the character would have answered differently if the questions were being asked by somebody else? For example, would Oggy Moxon speak differently to Mrs Parry than he would to the police? Or his dad?

WORKSHOP IDEAS



EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Explorative Strategies

Role Play: A technique to help performers improvise in character

Activity

In small groups, improvise a scene featuring some of the characters from *Teechers* in a setting that we don't see in the play.

You may want to improvise one of the scenes that we hear about but never get to witness.

Examples include:

Nixon takes the drama class on a trip to see Rocky Horror Picture Show

Oggy Moxon has a party in his dad's pub and invites students from the school

The students from Whitewall meet some of the students from Saint George's who think they are 'thickies'

Hobby and Oggy Moxon working together on the farm after they leave school

Things to consider

How can you use what you learnt from the hot seating exercise to help you?

*What do you know about how certain characters in *Teechers* relate to other people?*

If you are playing a character that does not appear in the play (e.g Oggy's Dad, Saint George's students), are your decisions on how to play them based on information from the text? You will have to fill in some of the gaps yourself.

Are you staying true to the characters in the play?

Is your character making the same decisions as you would in the same situation? Have you considered other ways of dealing with the situation?



Explorative Strategies

Forum Theatre: This is a technique used to encourage you to consider how you could change the outcome of a situation

Activity

Select one of the scenes from *Teechers* where one of the characters is oppressed by another (Where one character uses their higher status to make someone of a lower status do something they don't want to do). Examples of such situations in *Teechers* include:

The encounters between Nixon and Basford (Basford using the cover rota to punish Nixon etc),

Doug the caretaker moving Nixon and the after-school drama club out of the school hall

Nixon confronting Oggy Moxon behind the sports hall

- A small group should play this scene out, script in hand if you need to, while the rest of the group observe.
- Once the scene has finished, discuss as an audience what could have happened differently in order to avoid the 'oppression'.
- The scene should be played again and at any time an audience member can freeze the scene and step in to the place of the central character or join the scene as an additional character in order to try to alter the course of the action.
- You can only take the place of a character that wants the situation to change, you could not, for example, take the place of Oggy Moxon in the scene behind the sports hall and make Oggy be nice to Nixon.
- You may not offer violence as a method of change. This is not an acceptable method according to the rules of forum theatre.
- A teacher should act as the 'Joker' for this exercise and rule out any suggestions which are either 'violent' or 'magical'.

Forum Theatre is one of the techniques developed by **Augusto Boal** as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed' theory. It is designed to encourage social change by allowing participants to consider how they can intervene in situations; it encourages positive change and challenges injustice.



Explorative Strategies

Still Image: A technique used to explore how performers can use levels, proxemics, body language and facial expression to show relationships between characters. Sometimes called 'freeze frames' or 'tableaux'.

Activity

Choose one of the scenes from *Teechers* and, in small groups, create a Still Image based on the selected scene.

Things to consider when making your scene:

How many characters are in the scene?

What is the action taking place?

Where is the scene set?

What has happened in the scene preceding this scene in the play?

What do we know about the relationships between the characters in this scene?

Discussion

Share these still images with the rest of the class who should offer feedback.

Things to consider when offering feedback:

Is it clear where the audience should be focusing in this scene?

What can you tell about how the characters relate to each other from the use of facial gestures and body language?

Is it clear in this image who has higher/lower status? How?

Are the performers in the scene still and focussed?

After each group has received feedback, they should go back and create these still images again, trying to include the notes that they received during feedback.

Show the images a second time.

Are these more/ less effective than before?

How have they improved?



Explorative Strategies

Thought Tracking: A technique used to explore how certain characters are feeling internally

Activity

- Choose one of the scenes from the synopsis on pages 6 & 7 and, in groups, act this scene out physically (no dialogue).
- One person from the group, **The Observer**, watches the scene from the outside.
- Agree in your group who is playing which characters and what the scenario is.
- Make sure that your physicality and characterisation is clear and that we know what your relationship is with the other characters.
- At any point in the scene, **The Observer** can clap their hands and everybody in the scene freezes in a **Still Image**.
- While the image is frozen, **The Observer** can ask questions of the characters in the scene about how they feel in that moment.

Example Scenario:

Nixon catches Oggy Moxon charging younger students for a look at his dad's 'dirty magazines'. Nixon threatens to report Oggy but realises the boy has free reign at the school. Nixon walks away, humiliated by the confrontation (Pg. 23-25)

Characters:

Oggy Moxon

Dennis

Younger students

Nixon

Example Questions:

How does Oggy feel when he sees Nixon approaching?

Why does Nixon approach Oggy even though he knows about his reputation?

Are the other students more afraid of the teacher or the bully?

How would Dennis behave if Oggy Moxon wasn't there?

WORKSHOP IDEAS



EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Practical Exploration

Explorative Strategies

Narrating: A dramatic technique used to fill in gaps in the action, explain a character's internal monologue or address the audience directly

Activity

We can use narration to explore the thoughts of characters during a scene or to fill in details for the audience between scenes, explaining the things that have happened that we perhaps do not see.

For this exercise we will develop the techniques that you used during the workshops on **Still Image** and **Thought Tracking** .

- Select four of the scenes from the synopsis on page 4 and 5 and create **Still Images** for each of them.
- In the transitions between **Still Images**, one of the performers can break out of the image and explain the events of the play that happen between the two scenes, to fill in the gaps for the audience.
- Once you have created all four **Still Images** and added narration to the transitions, think about how you might add narration to the **Still Images**. This may be with a single narrator or with characters breaking out of the **Still Image** to explain how they are feeling/ what they are doing.
- Share these scenes with the rest of your group and offer feedback

Things to consider

Who is the narrator addressing? The audience or the other characters?

Is the narration 'in-character'?

Is the narration adding new information? Or is it reinforcing the images we see on stage?

THE CURRENT PRODUCTION



EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to live performance

The first day of rehearsals involves a meet-and-greet between the cast and the staff at Theatre Royal Wakefield followed by a read-through of the script and a discussion of everyone's initial thoughts.

Present at the read-through are:

Cast: Laura Bryars, James Dryden, Francis Wood

Writer: John Godber

Director: Hannah Chissick

Designer: Graham Kirk

Costume Supervisor: Emma James

Company Manager: Tom Aspin

Deputy Stage Manager: Debbie Claydon

Production Manager (Theatre Royal Wakefield): Gareth Williams



Graham Kirk shows everyone the **Model Box** and explains his design concept (see Pg.24)

The cast read through the script. The Designer and production team make notes on the props and set that will be needed.

There is a discussion about the time period this production of *Teechers* will be set. The play was originally written with the idea that contemporary music could be added and that the references to films, musicians etc could be updated to the modern day.

A decision has been made to set this version in it's original late-80s time period.

Writer John Godber and Director Hannah Chissick both feel that there is enough distance from the original text to make it interesting to re-examine that time period and to explore how things have changed in the education system over the last 25 years.

John Godber gives some notes on the characters in the script and the people and places that they were inspired by.

The Director and cast move up to the rehearsal space to put the script 'on it's feet'.

THE CURRENT PRODUCTION



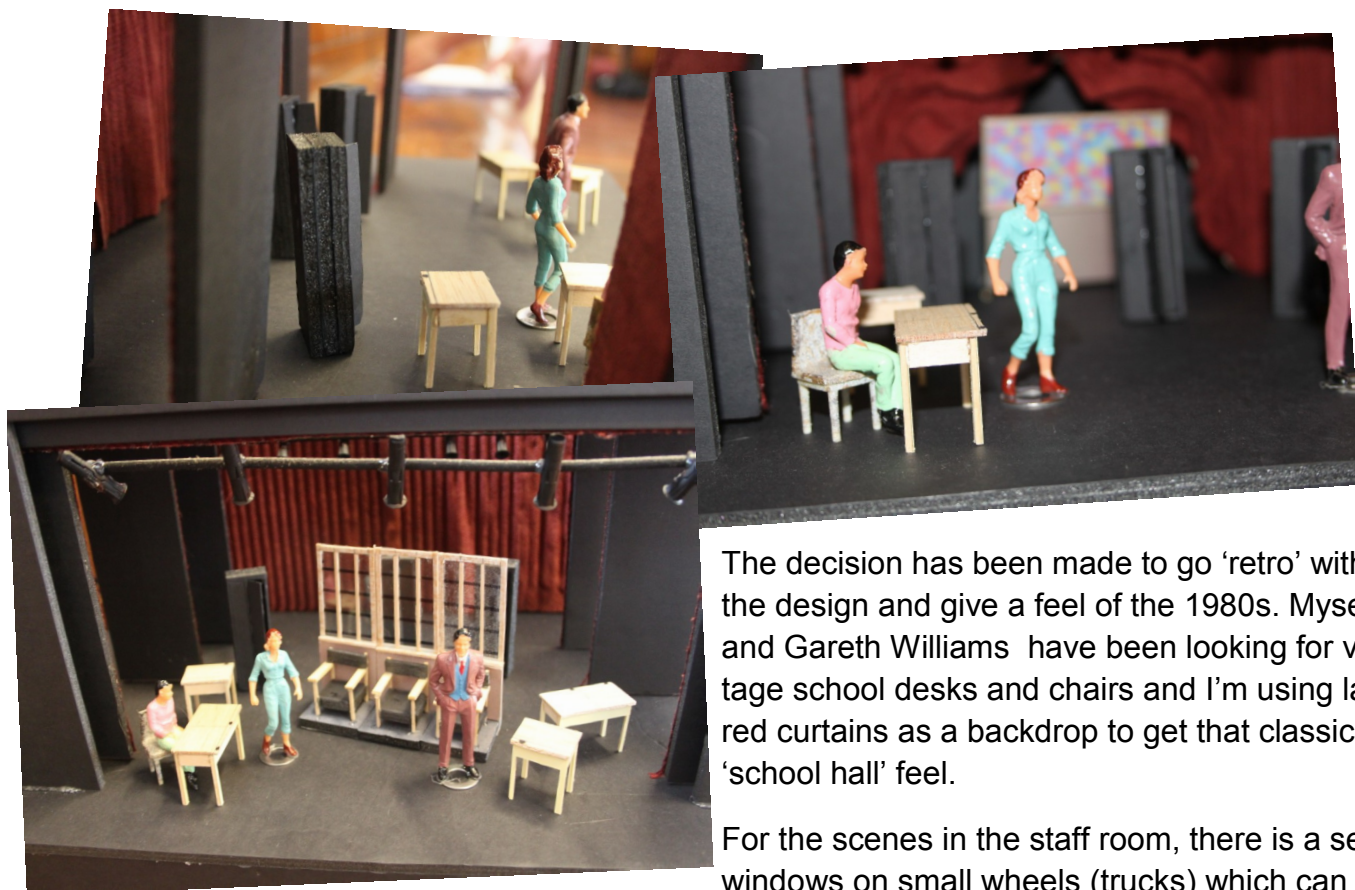
EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to live performance

Designer Graham Kirk Discusses the Model Box and Design Concept

At the initial read-through, I showed everyone the Model Box. This is a scale model of the stage with miniature versions of all of the set that will be built for the production.



The decision has been made to go 'retro' with the design and give a feel of the 1980s. Myself and Gareth Williams have been looking for vintage school desks and chairs and I'm using large red curtains as a backdrop to get that classic 'school hall' feel.

For the scenes in the staff room, there is a set of windows on small wheels (trucks) which can easily be brought on and off. The windows will be painted to look like it is raining and we will use rain-like lighting effects to add to this atmosphere. My first idea was to have actual running water for the rain effects but this proved to be very expensive and would have been difficult to transport on tour. The windows will split in to two parts so we only have to use part of them in smaller venues.

Vintage lockers will form part of the backdrop and these will also split up for smaller venues. The lockers will have false backs in them so that the cast can make some interesting entrances and exits through the lockers. The lockers will also have battery-powered disco lights in them which will be used for the school disco at the beginning of Act Two.

We're going all out to get that 80s feel and we're even bringing in some vintage theatre lighting that will be seen on stage. It gives that sense of that period of time and also adds to the Brechtian idea that we can see the mechanics of the performance.

WRITING A REVIEW



EDEXCEL

Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

Response to live performance

There are as many ways of writing a review of a show as there are reviewers, but there are certain things that are always useful for people reading the review to know.

Time/date/venue:

Producer(s)/ director:

Designer(s):

Writer:

Cast:

The story and/or themes of the performance:

It is also important that a reviewer makes it clear how they felt about the show. Here are some ideas to consider:

What did you enjoy about the actors' performances?

What dramatic techniques did they use? Would you have made the same choices?

Notes on the set; what did you like about it?

Choice of music/ lighting (when was this most effective). How did this impact on the themes and events of the performance?

A favourite/ most effective moment?

How does this performance compare to other, similar shows that you have seen in the past?

Young Reviewers@TRW

Theatre Royal Wakefield run a scheme offering free theatre tickets to young people (14-25) who would like to write reviews of the shows that they come to see.

If you would like to know more about this scheme then please contact:

Amy.Charles@theatreroyalwakefield.co.uk

JOHN GODBER : PROFILE

John was born the son of a miner in Upton, West Yorkshire. He trained as a teacher of drama at Bretton Hall College. Whilst he was Head of Drama at Minsthorpe High School, the school he attended as a student, he won every major award at the National Student Drama Festival between 1981 and 1983.

He has recently completed a new play for David Pugh Ltd and is working with DLT Productions on a new BBC comedy series.



John's plays are performed across the world. He has the distinction of being one of the most performed writers in the English language. He has won numerous awards for his plays, including a Laurence Olivier Award and seven Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards.

His plays include: Bouncers, Up 'n' Under, April in Paris, Teechers, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Cramp, Happy Jack, September in the Rain, Salt of the Earth, Passion Killers, Happy Families, Up 'n' Under II, Gym and Tonic, Dracula, Lucky Sods, Hooray for Hollywood, Weekend Breaks, It Started With a Kiss, Unleashed, Thick As a Brick, Big Trouble in the Little Bedroom, Seasons in the Sun, On a Night Like This, Our House, Departures, Men of the World, Reunion, Screaming Blue Murder, Black Ties and Tales, Perfect Pitch, Going Dutch, Christmas Crackers and Crown Prince.

His most recent play, Losing The Plot, was a co-production with Theatre Royal Wakefield which garnered critical acclaim and rave reviews from the national press after touring to 14 venues across the country before being revived at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this Summer.

Within his extensive career in writing and directing in TV and film, John also devised the BBC2 series Chalkface, and his screenplay My Kingdom for a Horse, starring Sean Bean, was nominated for an Alternative BAFTA Award.

John's first feature film, Up 'n' Under, was released in January 1998. In 2005, he co-wrote Odd Squad for BBC2 with his wife, Jane, which was shot in Hull using local actors. Odd Squad won two British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards in the Schools Drama category and in the BAFTA Original Writer section.

John has an MA from Leeds University, an hon DLitt from Hull University, an hon DLitt from Lincoln University, a DUni for the Open University and was a PHD research student for five years at Leeds University. He is a professor of contemporary theatre at Liverpool Hope University, a visiting professor of drama at Hull University, a professor at Sheffield Hallam University and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

John was Artistic Director of Hull Truck for 26 years, taking it from bankruptcy in 1984 to its new home in a £15 million theatre in 2010. In 2011, he set up The John Godber Company with his playwright wife, Jane, and formed a partnership with Theatre Royal Wakefield to produce two tours of his work each year. Since then his plays have continued to tour the UK and have been seen by over 40,000 people.

JOHN GODBER : Q&A

How do you feel about the current changes that are taking place within the education system?

Currently the new proposals for the revised curriculum in 2015 don't have any strong arts subjects at the core, this was the case when *Teechers* was written in 1987 and the arts are still being marginalized now.

Ken Robinson (Professor of Education at University of Warwick) says that as babies and toddlers we are educated through play, music and creativity. The older we get the further we move away from that kind of learning until we are only educating one side of our brains. We all learn in different ways, where's the kinetic, immersive learning gone?

Academic John Hodgson talks about play and where our creativity comes from while Mary Warnock (University of Cambridge) says if we don't encourage people to use their imagination, how are they able to think? Unless you imagine a problem how can you begin to solve it?

It goes back to the question that's been asked a lot lately which is, should someone who's had no practical teaching or classroom experience be making decisions about our children's education?

According to a report by US based education firm Pearson, Finland has the best Education system in the world, do you think *Teechers* would have the same impact in a country where the politics were different?

I imagine it would be very different. Interestingly Finland have been criticized for excessive provision in arts and culture yet they have come top in the Pearson study, surely there's a correlation.

If you were to return to Teaching, would you do anything differently the second time around?

If I'm completely honest I wouldn't go back to teaching now, the game has changed so much. It's a battle now, even more than it was when I was teaching.

I wouldn't do anything differently though, I was always a driven teacher, I had a passion for turning kids on to literature and showing them that writers were human beings not strange old men with beards.

I never considered giving up in the way that Mr Nixon does in the play. I think all teachers idolize the school they'd like to work in but I don't think you should ever give up, physical assault / abusive situations aside.

You haven't directed the show this time, how does it feel when someone else takes on the direction of one of your plays?

Well, I know Hannah very well, she has directed several of my plays and I've always enjoyed what she has done with them. I'm looking forward to seeing her work on *Teechers*.

GLOSSARY

Below are a list of some of the terms that you will come across in this education pack and definitions of their use:

- Action:** What is happening on stage.
- Boal, Augusto:** Brazilian theatre practitioner (b.1931-d.2009). Founder of 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Created Forum Theatre.
- Body Language:** How performers communicate emotions physically.
- Brecht, Bertolt:** German theatre practitioner (b.1898-d.1956). Known for his theories on Epic Theatre and Verfremdungseffekt.
- Characterisation:** A performer's vocal and physical behaviour, specific to a particular character.
- Climax:** A gradual building tension, leading to a sudden explosion of heightened action/ emotion.
- Contrast:** Two or more opposite elements which, when seen next to each other, highlight differences.
- Costume:** The clothes/ outfits worn on stage by performers to signify which role they are playing.
- Designer:** The person responsible for the way certain production elements look eg, Lighting Designer, Set Designer etc
- Director:** The person who oversees rehearsals and offers feedback to performers/ gives creative input. Often responsible for the overall 'feel' of a performance.

GLOSSARY

Form:	The way that the content of a performance is presented to an audience/ the framing of ideas.
Gesture:	Physical movements used by performers
Levels:	Varying points on a scale, a character's level of importance/ emotion etc.
Lighting:	The way that the set, stage and performers are illuminated.
Mime:	Silent performance, often featuring a much heightened level of tension and exaggeration of normal movement.
Naturalism:	A style of performance where actors and designers try to create the illusion that what is happening on stage is 'reality'.
Plot:	The story being told, the reasons for the action to unfold
Producer:	Will finance or find finance for a production. Responsible for the 'business' elements of a performance.
Props:	Items brought on/off stage by performers to assist in characterisation/ action/ plot development.
Proxemics:	How directors/ performers use spacing on stage to demonstrate relationships
Rhythm:	The pattern of pauses and emphasis in sound/ speech.
Set:	The way that a stage is dressed in order to convey a sense of place or a certain emotion/ theme
Staging:	Where the performers/set/ action is placed on the stage

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