THE SHAPE OF A GIRL

BY JOAN MACLEOD
PRODUCED BY GREEN THUMB THEATRE

STUDY GUIDE
MAINSTAGE MAY 11-19, 2011

STUDY GUIDE WRITTEN BY OISE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CANDIDATES
COORDINATED BY KAREN GILODO AND KAREN CHAN
DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY JAN BORKOWSKI
SEASON DESIGN BY KEYGORDON

FEAT. JENNIFER PATERSAN
PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER.
GROUNDS RULES:
As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please review the following theatre rules with your students prior to your LKTP visit.

- Food, drinks, candy and gum are not permitted in the theatre.
- LKTP is a nut-free zone. Many children have severe life-threatening allergies; NO PEANUTS or NUT products may be brought to our theatre.
- No electronic devices are permitted in the theatre because they affect our sound system. Photography, audio and video recording during a performance is prohibited by the Canadian Theatre Agreement.
- Students are not permitted to leave the theatre unless they are accompanied by an adult.

THEATRE IS A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE:
Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. However, please be considerate audience members. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors, and disruptive for other audience members.

Enhance your visit by encouraging your students to look at different aspects of the production. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. Have one group of students looking at the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what they observed. Your students will be more informed and they’ll be surprised by how much they noticed. Ask them to be prepared with one question for the actors after the show. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!
THE STUDY GUIDE
THEMATIC OVERVIEW

The Shape of a Girl is a retrospective account of Braidie, a girl who struggles to come to terms with bullying and violence that occurred in her past. Joan Macleod, was inspired by the horrific incident that happened in 1997 – the violent murder of Reena Virk by her peers.

Braidie is a bystander who reflects upon the treatment of a bullied friend. She observes the power dynamics between friends from young age and sees the gradually intensifying hostility leading to violence. Braidie discovers how detrimental bullying is to the victim and examines her own actions and the actions of others who participate in the cycles of violence.

The play invites the audience to consider the ways in which events can build from seemingly innocuous conflicts to violent encounters. Through watching this play, the audience will come to understand how the passive bystander can also be part of the bullying process; their silent acceptance allows bullies to continue their hurtful behavior.

This study guide created in collaboration with a class of teacher candidates at UT/OISE, was designed for students to explore both the content and the form of this play. This guide aims to promote both a reflective and a practical response to the central issues and questions in the play. The suggested units encourage young people to reflect on their attitudes and emotional responses to the issue of violence. They will also focus on the dramatic form of the monologue. Studying the monologue will bring about deeper understandings of characters who speak of difficult pasts and reveals much about writing from various perspectives.

A huge thank you to Carolee Mason and her OISE Pre-Service Teacher Candidates for their inspiring work on this study guide:

Nadia Alldina, Gianna Antonacci, Celene Faludi, Stephen Furmaniuk, Devon Healey, Adrienne Kennedy, Caitlin Kennedy, Dante Labriola, Joanna Maxwell, Luke Nares, Kevin Parkin, Siobhan Power, Amanda Smith, Anna Swiderski, Victoria Weaver, Sarah West

STRANDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Social Studies, Health and Physical Education: Relationships and Social Skills

CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS: Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Empathy

THEMES: Violence, Conformity, Self-reflection

In addition to DRAMA and LANGUAGE ARTS, The Shape of a Girl directly relates to student development in the areas of:

SOCIAL STUDIES

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION: Relationship, Rules and Responsibilities
SYNOPSIS

Braidie wonders if the teen accused of a shocking act of violence is so very different from her and her friends. This “monster in the shape of a girl” propels Braidie to examine her own past and confront the truth of her often-terrifying teenage world. Is she courageous enough to intervene when her friends’ bullying of a classmate goes too far? This gripping and powerful play is inspired by a true story.

GLOSSARY

The words in the Glossary appear in pink throughout the study guide.

**Bully:** A conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression

**Character:** Representation of a personality type or role in a narrative or dramatic work of art

**Empathy:** The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another

**Monologue:** A prolonged form of dramatic piece performed by a single speaker

**Power:** The possession of control or command over others; authority; ability to act or affect something strongly; physical or mental strength

**Violence:** The intentional use of physical and psychological force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. (defined by World Health Organization)

UNITS OF STUDY

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS: By participating in these activities, students will:

- Demonstrate the ability to make connections that relate to well being – how their choices and behaviours affect both themselves and others.

- Explain the effectiveness of various conflict resolution processes in daily situations.

- Demonstrate understanding of conflict resolution, anger management, and mediation.

- Demonstrate the social skills required to work effectively in groups and develop positive relationships with their peers.

- Demonstrate teamwork skills that achieve positive results.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (A. SMITH)

- Why do we want power over others?
- Do we have to hurt others to get it?
- Does one person have to fall in order for another to succeed?
- What can we do in our schools to eradicate dangerous power dynamics that lead to devastating outcomes?
- Why do we find pleasure in the pain of others?
- Are we lacking empathy? If so, how do we develop it?

ACTIVITY 1: VIOLENCE? (J. MAXWELL, K. PARKIN)

Materials:
Blackboard, print-out of scenarios

Directions:
- Create three sections on the board:
  - “Violence”, “Not Violence”, “Not sure”
- Distribute to the students situations on slips of paper. Have students place their situation on the board with tape under the category they think that fits.
- Once the students have placed their situations on the board, read them the World Health Organization’s definition of violence.
- Once the students have had a chance to hear the definition of violence, they will have the opportunity to move their situation if they have changed their mind.

World Health Organization definition of violence: The intentional use of physical and psychological force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.

APPENDIX 6
EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS:

1. Mike pushes Josh around because he is small and easy to manipulate
2. The word fag is spray painted on a wall where everyone can see.
3. A suicide bomber takes his life in a crowded square.
4. Stephen teases Ashna for wearing a hijab saying “Aren’t you hot under there?”
5. A group of girls makes another girl do their homework in exchange for friendship.
6. A neo-Nazi facebook group.
7. An employer pats his employee on the behind as he passes by.
8. Derogatory comments are called out at women passing by.

- Conduct a discussion about violence and things the students have witnessed or heard about in schools.
- Did students change their minds on where the situation should be placed? Why? Were they surprised at the definition and some of the things considered to be violence?

Extensions:
- This activity can be extended into a slow-motion tableaux group activity with beginning, middle and end to illustrate some of the situations.
CULMINATING ACTIVITY: VIOLENCE IN CONTEXT
A MONSTER IN THE SHAPE OF A GIRL. (C. FALUDI & K. CHAN)

Preface:
The Shape of a Girl was inspired by a true event that happened in 1997, the murder of Reena Virk, which drew attention as a national tragedy.

Directions:
• Invite the class to sit in a circle. Read the article entitled “I Am Not a Monster” (on page 13)
• Following the reading, ask students to think about why Ellard rejects the notion that she is a “monster.”
• What is a monster?
• Ask students to create a list of monsters from literature and/or popular culture. What do they have in common? What makes them different?
• What functions do monsters serve in literature? In popular culture?
• In this article a criminal act is being related to the term “monster”? Is this an accurate connection? Why? Why not?

Debrief and Extension:
To conclude this unit, it will be important to draw out understandings of interventions and violence prevention strategies.
• Ask students to explore some of the websites on the resource page ? and create a collaborative classroom list of violence prevention strategies.
• Once students have completed the list, ask them to think critically about it. Will these prevention strategies work? How? Have they done similar exercises with their school/class in past? What was the outcome? Will this list provide different outcomes? If yes, why? If no, why not?

POST-SHOW UNIT

Curriculum Expectations: By participating in these activities, students will:
• Create different interpretations of a single drama work, for performance.
• Create drama pieces, selecting and using a variety of techniques.
• Identify the factors that contribute to positive relationships with others.
• Use appropriate social skills and positive attitudes when interacting with others.
• Use the elements and conventions of drama effectively in creating individual and ensemble drama works, including works based on a variety of sources.
• Use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, both individually and collaboratively, to design and develop drama works.
• Demonstrate an understanding of the challenges involved in human interaction.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (N. ALLIDINA, S. POWER, D. LABRIOLA)

• Why do you think the audience only hears Braidie’s voice in the play?

• If students could listen/speak to any other character, which character would it be and why?

• How does Braidie feel as she is sharing her monologue?

• How do students think Braidie felt at different stages of her story?

• Do any characters show empathy in Braidie’s story? If so, when? How?

• How do students connect to the characters in the play?

• How are students similar to Braidie and how are students different from Braidie?

• Ask students to identify the important relationships in the play? Characters? Conflict? Setting? Time?

• What is the power dynamic like amongst the friends?

• What makes a good friend?

ACTIVITY 1: PHYSICALITY OF STATUS

Directions:

• Students will be paired up for this activity.

• Student A will begin as the MASTER, Student B as the SLAVE.

• The SLAVE must always follow the MASTER’s hand for the MASTER directs the SLAVE.

• However, this activity will not simply be a mirror image activity. Instead the MASTER will start with his/her hand to be followed by the SLAVE’s nose as the MASTER moves about the room, varying HEIGHT, PACE, and DIRECTION.

• This activity involves the WHOLE body of each student: for when the MASTER moves on from using his/her hand to direct the SLAVE, s/he will have other body parts as the locus of control (ex. MASTER’s right shoulder must be followed by SLAVE’s left foot).

• At all times, the students are to attempt to keep the same distance between them, while continuing to experiment with HEIGHT, PACE, and DIRECTION.

Debrief:

• What is challenging about this activity? What is easy?

• What was the relationship that developed between the leader (MASTER) and follower (SLAVE)? Was it hierarchical? Or did you have to come to an unspoken agreement with your partner to always preserve the exact distance between you?

• How did it feel to be the master or the slave? Did your perspective change when the role was reversed? How?

• How can this activity be connected to Adrienne’s relationship with her friends?

• Discuss power dynamics, cliques in groups of friends and how peer pressure or a leader’s pressure can lead others to bullying.
ACTIVITY 2: MINGLE ME (A. SWIDERSKI)

Objective:
Mingle Me allows students to get up on their feet and interact with one another. It elicits active participation, cooperative learning and peer interaction. The activity allows students to focus on a single character from The Shape of a Girl and explore key questions that examine his or her personality, individuality, qualities and life.

Directions:
To facilitate a Mingle Me activity, have students choose a character. If analyzing The Shape of a Girl, students should focus on one character from the play to whom they feel strongly connected and feel they understand.

• Students will then travel around the classroom with their character in mind. They do not assume the role of this character; instead they travel with them, as if they are their invisible guest to the party.

• Allow the students to mingle amongst one another for a few moments before announcing that they stop and pair up with someone beside them. Students will then introduce their invisible characters of choice to one another.

• After the student introduces their guest character, the other student asks a question about them. The introducing student must then hypothesize what the answer might be based on their familiarity and connection with the character, in this case, Braidie. The answer might be “I often spend time with my brother Trevor”.

Debrief:
Facilitate a discussion and have students share what they experienced. Did this help them connect with the play? What have you learned about your chosen character? What questions were most effective? Students may also be encouraged to go home and reflect in writing.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: STILL IMAGE (N. ALLIDINA)

Objective:
Explore critical scenes from The Shape of a Girl using tableaus. This exercise will aid students in understanding the roles, feelings and relationships of characters in the play. Creating tableaux will help students understand various roles in the play and experience what characters may have been feeling at critical moments. Building on the scene by adding other characters adds depth to understanding of primary characters.

Directions:
Tableau 1

• Divide class into groups of five. Instruct students to create tableaux using their bodies to crystallize critical moments in the play The Shape of a Girl. Instruct the students to create the tableaux in chronological order.

• The first tableaux should be an introduction to the play – or a scene that occurred near the beginning. The two scenes to follow should depict rising action. The fourth should be an image of, what the group believes to be, the most critical moment in the play. The final image should be a conclusion or resolution. Ask students to focus on displaying varying levels, facial expressions and body language to crystallize meaning into each image.

Possible scenes that can be used to create the still-images are:

1. 8 years old - Sofie is the new girl
2. 10 years old - Sofie is known as IT
3. 12 years old - Class goes to see Hamlet
4. 12 years old - Adrienne attacks Sofie on the beach
5. 14 years old - Adrienne bullies Sofie at school while Braidie watches
6. 15 years old - Braidie tells Annie about Sofie
7. Final Scene - 8 years old - Adrienne, Amber, Sofie and Braidie are at the beach
• Ask groups to present their five tableaux to their classmates.

• After each tableau within a group presentation, tap each group member on the shoulder to reveal the character’s thoughts/feelings at that moment. Once the group has shared their still-images, ask audience members the following questions:

  1. How did you feel when you were watching the presentation?
  2. How did this group use levels to show relationships between characters?
  3. What emotions were shown on the characters’ faces?

• After the students have discussed the scenes, ask the group members to present their tableaux again and ask audience members to add other characters to each still-image. Once an audience member has added a character, tap them on the shoulder to reveal that character’s thoughts at that moment.

**Debrief:**
Who were some of the characters added to the images? How did the bullying affect the added characters? In real life, when someone is being bullied, who is affected by the bullying and why?

**EXPLORING FORM: MONOLOGUE WRITING & ACTING UNIT**

**Curriculum Expectations:** By participating in these activities, students will

• Apply the creative process for the development of drama works, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and multiple perspectives.

• Use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, individually to design and develop dramatic work.

• Use the elements and conventions of drama effectively in creating individual dramatic work.

• Establish a distinctive voice in their writing, modifying language and tone skilfully to suit the form, audience, and purpose for writing.

• Demonstrate an understanding of the nature and function of drama forms, elements, conventions, and techniques, including the correct terminology for the various components.

• Use the critical analysis process to reflect on and evaluate their own and others’ drama works and activities.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (C. FALUDI, L. NARES, C. KENNEDY)**

• Is it valuable to work with a partner to improve dramatic writing skills? Why? Why not?

• What types of dramatic techniques help to improve monologue writing?

• What does my character want most? What does she/he hope for?

• What does she/he fear most?

• How does this character spend their time! What does she/he do for fun! What does she/he hope will change about her/his life?

• What does this character see as the most important thing in life?

• How does she/he see her/himself?
ACTIVITY 1: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT & MONOLOGUE WRITING  
(L. NARES, S. FURMANIUK, G. ANTONACCI)

Monologue Introduction Discussion:
What is a monologue?
What are some monologues that people remember?
What purpose do they serve?

Directions:
Monologue in a Minute
• Students will take a minute (or up to 5) to write down everything they can in the voice of their character with the prompt: What do you want the most in the world right now?

• Encourage them with further prompts: Why do you want this? Have you ever had it? What is the first thing you would do if you got it right this second?

Energizer
• Have students walk around the class to loud music. Whenever the music stops, they should deliver a line from their new monologues.

Group Creative Monologue Development
• Have students walk around the class to loud music. Whenever the music stops, they should deliver a line from their new monologues.

Energizer
• Have students walk around the class to loud music. Whenever the music stops, they should deliver a line from their new monologues.

ACTIVITY 2: MONOLOGUE TEXT EXPLORATION  
(C. KENNEDY)

Objective:
Through this activity, students will realize the importance of diction and focusing on how each word can change their monologue. At this point, they should have at least a draft of their monologue ready. They will also explore the importance of voice changing to create different tones and feelings.

Direction:
• Ask students to choose one word from their monologue and answer the following questions:

  1. What is the definition of the word?
  2. Where did it come from? (etymology)
  3. What symbols are connected to this word?
  4. List other words that connect to it.
  5. How does this word connect to the monologue?

• Ask students to choose seven words/sounds, either from the text or words/sounds they believe reflect the piece.

• Create a one minute piece that summarizes the story being told by your character using only these seven words/sounds. Students may use each word any amount of times.

Debrief:
Discuss with students this exercise can help them start their process in acting out their monologues. Ask them: From what you have researched on specific words, has this deepened or brought out any meaning from your piece? What words do you think you can add or take out of your monologue to enhance the expression and delivery of your piece?
ACTIVITY 3: MONOLOGUE ACTING & PERFORMANCE POLISHING CHECKLIST (S.G. WEST & V. WEAVER)

Objective:
Trial Performance of Monologues are used to peer assess in order to add, rework or change elements of monologues so that students can then focus on heightening the aesthetics, pacing, balance, and climactic moments. Students have had an opportunity to develop and sequence their scenes, transitions, and rehearse the overall piece. We will fit this together with warm-ups, setting the stage, and assessing our progress and readiness both onstage and off.

Direction:
• Read Harold Guskin's “Taking it off the Page” article: page (16)

• Students will break into groups of three and take turns reading their monologue pieces to one another, while following Guskin’s breathing and thought evoking techniques. The students who play the audience to the reader are to take critical notes.

• Using the Performance Polishing Checklist (in Appendix 2), provide positive and constructive feedback to the student who has read first.

Extension:
Have students work on self-evaluation using Performance Polishing Checklist to add to written monologues.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: MONOLOGUES AND THE SHAPE OF A GIRL (S. POWER, L. NARES, S.G. WEST)

Objective:
Students will create a collective piece using monologues written in role from the perspective of additional characters in “The Shape of a Girl”.

Through class discussion students are allocated a specific role to compose a monologue. Students are welcome to pick a character from the play based on their connections to the character. The monologues will reflect the point of view of the character and contain details of a specific plot point. If more than one character is assigned then the students can explore and expose the private and public thoughts of the same experience.

Example: If there are two Sofie’s reflecting a similar plot point, private Sofie could share a diary entry and public Sofie could share how she feels in the presence of her parents.

Directions:
• Introduce the culminating performance piece to the class.

• Since the students will be familiar with each other’s pieces at this point, the students will write their character name on a piece of paper and post each paper in a timeline on a wall.

• The students will be asked to look at the timeline and ask themselves if they made the correct choice in where they placed their character within the storyline.

• Students will be asked to justify their placement, and they can feel free to move if they feel it is necessary for their character.

• Using character motifs, gestures and themes, have students build transitions using the chronological model.

• Students will deliver their monologues and transitions using the timeline format.

Extension:
Have students work on self-evaluation using Performance Polishing Checklist on page 12 to add to written monologues.
APPENDIX 1

Name: _______________________

Performance Polishing Checklist

Please keep notes of each stage during your offstage time. Consider what your strengths and challenges were, and note suggestions for other actors in the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>To Keep</th>
<th>To change, add or re-work</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set up set, props, costume pieces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and vocal warm-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation/Getting in Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage and off-stage etiquette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions: pacing, volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocking: Lighting, visibility from all angles, cheating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection, sound levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall pacing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtain call order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weeping and rocking in the witness box under a gruelling cross-examination yesterday, Kelly Ellard denied up and down that she killed classmate Reena Virk. Finally, the frustration spilled into anger and Ms. Ellard shot back: “I am not a monster.” It was a tense moment between the young accused and Crown attorney Catherine Murray, but Ms. Ellard’s outburst failed to dent the prosecutor’s blistering questions.

Ms. Murray’s cross-examination of Ms. Ellard began yesterday morning and lasted throughout the afternoon. It began just seconds after Ms. Ellard finished her take of events the night Reena Virk was beaten and drowned under a Victoria bridge in November, 1997.

Under the gentle questions of her lawyer, Ms. Ellard admitted that she was an active participant in a first attack on Reena when a gang of classmates lured the Grade 9 student under Victoria’s Craigflower Bridge and beat her senseless, leaving the girl dazed and bleeding in the mud.

Dressed in a demure pink sweater with her hair pulled into a ponytail, Ms. Ellard admitted throwing the first punch against Reena. But she vehemently denied the prosecution’s theory that she and Warren Glowatski followed the injured girl across the bridge, beat her again and drowned her in an inland waterway.

Instead, she said, she sat at a bus stop after watching Reena cross the bridge. About 10 minutes later, Mr. Glowatski appeared from the bridge, looking agitated. He told Ms. Ellard that he and two other girls followed Reena and beat her again. When he left the scene, the girls were still struggling with Reena in the water.

Ms. Ellard is charged with second-degree murder. Mr. Glowatski was convicted of the same charge in 1999.

Yesterday, Ms. Ellard had barely finished her side of the story when Ms. Murray was on her feet, punching holes in her version. Ms. Murray suggested that Ms. Ellard did not just succumb to mob anger on Reena; rather, she helped with the plan to lure Reena under the Craigflower Bridge.

She suggested the attack was to settle a score between Reena and at least two other girls, who were angry at Reena over a series of petty issues.

One believed Reena had taken her address book and called boys listed in it.

But Ms. Ellard, now 21, had an answer for each of Ms. Murray’s accusations.

She said she had no reason to kill Reena; she didn’t even know her.

“You and [another teen] would beat her up for all the problems Reena was causing you, right?” Ms. Murray asked.

“No,” Ms. Ellard replied.

“You had cooked up this plan to lure her there, right?”

“No,” Ms. Ellard replied again.

“You didn’t care about her, did you?” Ms. Murray asked.

“I didn’t know her,” Ms. Ellard replied.

At another point, Ms. Murray suggested that Ms. Ellard was cruel. In tears, Ms. Ellard replied: “Everyone is capable of being cruel -- even you. But I didn’t kill Reena Virk,”

Later, Ms. Murray asked Ms. Ellard how she felt when she saw Reena crumpled in the mud, with her hands buried in her face. “Is that thought making you upset?” It was then that Ms. Ellard replied: “Obviously -- I am not a monster.”

At several points in the exchange, Ms. Murray asked the accused whether she needed to take a break.

“Please quit repeating yourself,” Ms. Ellard said, nearly moaning. “You keep wasting time. I just want to get it over with.”

In the public gallery, Ms. Ellard’s mother wiped tears from her eyes as she watched her daughter spar with the prosecutor.
GUIDELINES FOR WRITING MONOLOGUES

Important Decision/Crossroads
The most dramatic moments are those where the audience gets to see a character make a choice right there in the moment. Ensure that you are choosing to dramatize an important crossroads for your character. Find a problem in her/his life that must be solved, a choice between two paths, etc. Allow her/him to really go over the options; having a character believe one thing and then change her/his mind over the course of a speech can be a very interesting thing to read.

Emotional Build
Monologues always start in one emotional place and finish in another. Often this is the result of a build in intensity of emotion or intention on the part of the speaker. Whether the character changes her/his mind and changes emotion through the piece, or stays with one point of view which intensifies, there must be a development of both thought and intensity through the monologue.

Context
You must have a deep understanding of the situation each character finds her/himself in at each given moment. Insert details of your character’s life into your text whenever you can. Give us the flavour of her/his life.

Diction/Attitude
Pay attention to how your character speaks, what words she/he uses, how emotional she/he gets, and the kinds of things that upset her/him.

Style
Is this a comic monologue? Melodramatic (sad, angry, emotional)? Dramatic writing is always concerned with how an audience will respond to a character in a given moment. Should the audience laugh at or with this character? Become enraged? Feel pity? Make a clear choice. Sometimes there can be a progression between two different or opposite reactions – i.e., a monologue can start out humourous, but end with the audience pitying the character.

Each of your monologues should show evidence of consideration of all of these elements.
# APPENDIX 4

**CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS**

1. **WHO AM I?** (name, age, address, relatives, likes, dislikes, hobbies, description of physical traits, religion, education, enemies, loved ones, etc.)

2. **WHAT TIME IS IT?** (Century, year, season, day, minute, grade, significance of this time, etc.)

3. **WHERE AM I?** (Country, city, neighbourhood, location, room etc.)

4. **WHAT SURROUNDS ME?** (Animate and inanimate objects, social conditions, details about my environment)

5. **WHAT ARE THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES?** (What has just happened, is happening, and do I expect to happen?)

6. **WHAT ARE MY RELATIONSHIPS?** (newness or familiarity, age difference, affiliations, feelings towards)

7. **WHAT DO I WANT?** (Character’s need. The main objective in the moment and in the scene)

8. **WHAT’S IN MY WAY?** (Who, what is in the way of getting what you want)

9. **WHAT WILL I DO TO GET WHAT I WANT?** (specific physical or verbal examples)
A process called “Taking It off the Page” allows the actor to discover or rediscover the foundation of acting through the text, with no preconceptions of how to play the role.

Here’s how it works: The actor looks down at the phrase and breathes in and out while he reads the words to himself, giving himself time to let the phrase into his head. Then he looks up from the page and says the line, no longer reading, but speaking.

Taking your time to breathe in and out while you look down at the page to read the phrase for yourself allows you to access whatever unconscious thoughts or images it evokes. It doesn’t matter what comes up—how ever trivial, simple, deep, or apparently unrelated it is—as long as it is your actual response at the time, and NOT what you think is appropriate.

As soon as you exhale, say the phrase before you have a chance to censor whatever thought or feeling surfaces. Just say what you mean, no matter how startling, stupid, frightening, funny, touching, irreverent, or boring. You have to trust your outrageous responses as much as the subtle ones.

Often actors are afraid they won’t have a feeling for the writer’s line. And sometimes the honest response to a line is, “I don’t feel or think anything”. In life, it takes courage to admit to yourself that you don’t really have any feelings about something. By accepting this and allowing yourself to do nothing because you feel nothing, you are making yourself available to the surprising and unpredictable responses that follow.

Don’t get too exacting about how much text to take off the page at a time. You may pick up a phrase or a whole line or even a couple of short lines at once. Do whatever your instinct tells you.
APPENDIX 6
EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS:

1. Mike pushes Josh around because he is small and easy to manipulate.

2. The word fag is spray painted on a wall where everyone can see.

3. A suicide bomber takes his life in a crowded square.

4. Stephen teases Ashna for wearing a hijab saying “Aren’t you hot under there?”

5. A group of girls makes another girl do their homework in exchange for friendship.

6. A neo-Nazi Facebook group.

7. An employer pats his employee on the behind as he passes by.

8. Derogatory comments are called out at women passing by.
The Shape of a Girl
by Joan MacLeod

Braidie wonders if the teen accused of a shocking act of violence is so very different from her and her friends. This “monster in the shape of a girl” propels Braidie to examine her own past and confront the truth of her often-terrifying teenage world. Is she courageous enough to intervene when her friends’ bullying of a classmate goes too far? This gripping and powerful play is inspired by a true story.

THEMES:
Violence, Conformity, Self-reflection

BOOKS:
Hate List by Jennifer Brown
Lucas by Kevin Brooks
Jumped by Rita Williams-Garcia
See No Evil by Diane Young
Hold On by Alan Gibbons

On the Reena Virk Story


P. A7. Print Attached.


Steinberg, Corey D. “Reena Virk Story: Senseless Teen Violence – Senseless Waste”.


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oX0pjKkZaOQ>


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMeCWX9hLe8>
Bullying Prevention Resources


<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cp/res/bully-eng.aspx#a06>


<http://www.stopbullying.gov/teens/index.html>

YOU CAN. Web. 31 Mar 2011. <http://youcan.ca/content/resources>

YOU CAN is a non-profit organization specializing in youth-led methods for non-violent conflict resolution.

Acting References


Arts Impact: Making a difference in the lives of students

LKTYP is proud to have Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life as lead sponsors for its Arts Impact programme, which provides opportunities for schools in low-income areas of Toronto to participate in quality arts education. Arts Impact’s goal is to deepen students’ understanding of theatre, allowing them to be inspired by the material presented on stage and to think in ways that challenge their own perceptions.

Connections: Addressing the pattern of poverty

There is empirical evidence that children who live in poverty are at greater risk of dropping out of school. Studies have also proven that exposure to the arts improves scholastic ability and attendance. Thanks to the generosity of CIBC Children’s Foundation, LKTYP can offer special subsidized tickets to qualifying schools.
(formerly Young Peoples Theatre) is the largest Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company in Canada and a significant institution in the Canadian professional theatre community. Over our 45-year history we have produced many of the most important works that now form the canon of plays for young audiences in this country. At the heart of founder Susan Rubes’ idea for Young Peoples Theatre (YPT) was a belief that children deserve a theatre of their own – with resources and standards no lesser than those for adults. She believed – as we do today – that young people deserve good theatre because theatre is good for young people.

Through the communal experience of the theatre we create for them, children can receive indications of what is important, funny, trivial; positive, negative, wrong, right, rightish, wrongish; frightening, reassuring, empowering, unavoidable; familiar, new, eternal … We strongly believe that even through the most playful of plays, we are speaking powerfully to children about the community and the world in which they live.

Therefore, at the centre of the artistic policy of LKTYP is a desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people. We want children to be imprinted with experiences that will increase their access to the world, in order for them to grow into the unique and wonderful people they were born to be. To do this, our programming is drawn from the world classics of children’s stories, from contemporary works, from the new plays we develop, and from productions showcasing the most innovative and accomplished theatre for young audiences by other Canadian and international theatre companies.

At LKTYP, because we are serious about child development through theatre art, children can experience our work as either audience members or theatre creators. We extend the learning opportunities of our professional productions through our substantial Education & Participation Department. The Department’s services for teachers and students helps connect curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to the content of our professional productions; its Community Participation projects link our theatre skill with the educational aspirations of partners who are dedicated to the growth of young people; our interest-based Drama School offers young people the chance to engage deeply in the excitement of theatre art; and our Community Volunteer programme offers everyone who wants it, the opportunity to participate in the mission of LKTYP.

LKTYP is not only a professional theatre for young audiences but a vital community-based centre of arts education.