

THE GLEE CLUB

EDUCATION PACK

**OUT
OF JOINT**

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INTRODUCTION

Of all of the years of my growing up, I grew up in 1962.'

Colin, Act 1 scene 1

The 'Glee Club', made up of five hard working, hard drinking miners and a church organist, is preparing for the local gala. Though they're established on the working men's circuit, they aren't exactly at the vanguard of a musical revolution. This is the summer of 1962; music and much else is about to change – so too the lives of these six men. Nothing and no one will ever be the same again.

The Glee Club is an extraordinary portrait of a group of friends on the verge of enormous change, both good and bad. Their loyalty and love for each other is tested as they struggle to be there for each other when their world is ripped in two.

It is a show with fantastic songs and brilliant jokes, celebrating a world that has mostly been lost but is part of our history. Its themes, however, are very modern - loyalty, homophobia, loss of innocence, failure to communicate, music and masculinity.

This work pack provides an introduction to the play - its themes, story and characters, and gives an insight into the methods used by Out of Joint to bring this play to the stage. At the end of the pack there are eight practical exercises that can be used in the classroom to deepen understanding of how we brought this phenomenal play to life. They can also be applied to any play you're working on with your students.

If there is anything more you would like to know about *The Glee Club*, the page to stage process of an Out of Joint production, or if you would like to book a workshop, please contact our administrator Ruby Morris on 0207 609 0207 or at ruby@outofjoint.co.uk. You can also visit our website: www.outofjoint.co.uk.



KATE WASSERBERG

DIRECTOR OF THE GLEE CLUB

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, OUT OF JOINT

THE GLEE CLUB 2020: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARACTERS

The language of South Yorkshire to me has a rhythm and a poetry to it, which cuts corners and is full of alliteration. That, and the fact that I like to work through characters who like to keep their gobs shut – 'see all, say nowt' – is both a challenge and a joy to explore.

Richard Cameron, The Glee Club playwright

All the characters are miners from the same colliery; Yorkshire Main, Edlington. They are also the members of The 'Glee Club', a group of singers which tours the working men's clubs of South Yorkshire, performing to raise money for charity.

For all their rough, coarse, dangerous lives and language, the sound that they produce on stage together is better than just good. They are a polished act. Their commitment to giving the best they can to those romantic, even operatic, ballads from the forties and fifties, is total. Their era of the fifties is finished, but the music - the ballads, the melodies, Mario Lanza, Frankie Lane – still lingers on in the northern clubs.

Jack Horsfall – Late thirties. Ex-union rep. Married to Ellen. One son, Stephen. Solid, reliable, sturdy. Caught the end of the Second World War as a soldier in a Yorkshire regiment.

Scobie Glossop – Late thirties. Chubby. He is one half of the comic routine that the group perform as part of their act. Scobie is married to Brenda, who is pregnant with their fourth child. They have three girls. Scobie loves being a father. He is good at it.

Walt Hemmings – Mid thirties. Walt is a widower, with three children that have been farmed out. He is forever guilty at his inability to retain his family unit and is desperate for a woman to take him and his kids on. He sometimes plays the comic stooge to Scobie in the act. A little slow on the uptake sometimes.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARACTERS

Bant (Bantam) – Mid to late forties. A scrapper, a boozier. Tough as old boots. He works in the pit as part of the blasting crew. He has worked down the pit all his life. He is married, but separated, with one son who he hasn't seen for years. He can sing a bit of opera in Italian, and knows what it means. A quick wit. He plays the 'woman' in the act.

Colin Wrigglesworth – Nineteen. Feels he's at the start of something about to happen in music, wants to be a part of it. He has a girlfriend, Sandra. And a guitar – for a while.

Phil Newsome – Could be anywhere between thirty-five and fifty-five, in that he has always looked 'old fashioned'. Phil lives with his mother on the edge of the pit village (not one of the two up, two down terraces; an Edwardian semi), from where he gave music lessons for a number of years. He is the musical director and founder of the group, the accomplished pianist. He works in the offices as a mining engineer. He works part-time as choir master at the church.



Miners gather to listen to a speaker at a National Coal Miners' Union meeting in Workington, 1963, by Patrick Ward.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Setting: Edlington. A mining village on the outskirts of Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

It is the summer of 1962 and a group of Edlington miners are preparing for their summer gala. Their leader and pianist, Phil, is desperate for money but won't tell his friends why. As they rehearse and work, tell share stories, drink and tell filthy jokes, each man faces his own problems. Colin is caught between home, his girlfriend and his ambitions to leave and be a musician. Walt mourns his wife and dreams of a new mother for his children, who no longer live with him. Scobie awaits the arrival of a fourth child into his tiny house and rows with his teenage daughter. Bant observes his estranged wife's romance with the Rington's Tea man with growing fury. Jack is drawn to his childhood love. And Phil is being blackmailed.

As the gala approaches and the act comes together, these six close friends begin to fall apart. By the autumn, everything they think they know about each other will fall away, and the Glee Club will be gone forever.



Miners help each other clean off the soot and dust in the showers after a shift, by Patrick Ward.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

A theme in a play is an idea that pervades the whole story and touches all, or almost all of the characters in a profound way. Here are some themes from *The Glee Club* and how they affect the lives of our characters.

FRIENDSHIP AND MASCULINITY

Thas' got to talk about it. We're men of the world. Talk about it. We've all been there. Don't let it fester, let an older man give you some advice, some understandin'.

Scobie, Act 2, Scene 4

The men in *The Glee Club* are deeply affected by their friendships and ideas about what it means to be a man. Their attempts to connect - sometimes successful, sometimes not - are what give the play its emotional life. Here are some examples of how this theme moves each of the characters.

Discovering the truth about Phil's sexuality challenges **Scobie's** ideas about masculinity profoundly. He cannot reconcile his notions of masculinity with learning that the friend he has been so close to for so many years is gay, and what that identity signifies to Scobie. He experiences learning of Phil's sexuality as a personal betrayal, and he feels humiliated. This deep emotional response is tied to fixed ideas about what a man should be and costs him dearly.

Jack's would-be affair with the doctor's daughter sorely tests his friendship with Bant. Bant's deep affection for both Jack and his wife causes him to take Jack's disloyalty as a personal wound. The class difference between the doctor's daughter and himself shakes his sense of masculinity, as does his disloyalty to his wife. He is not the man he thought he was. Jack chooses to stand with Phil, and loses Scobie as a result, which challenges his ideas about what underpins his friendships with both men.

Colin learns much about different ways of being a man from his time in the Glee Club. He learns about loyalty and love, but also about how rigid ideas and an inability to talk and share feelings can rip apart relationships and stunt lives. In the end, he has to leave to redefine his sense of himself and live differently to the men he knew, but he never forgets them and the things he has learnt.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

FRIENDSHIP AND MASCULINITY

Walt feels a failure because he cannot keep his family together and look after his children. He obsesses over finding a wife, but is mostly passive, letting life happen to him. The inflexible ideas around parenting and gender in his community mean he never considers bringing his children home and instead endures guilt and loneliness. His friends in the Glee Club sympathise, but there is a limit to the help they feel able to offer. Despite their closeness, there is an unspoken rule that no one gets too involved in anyone else's business. This lack of action from the community ultimately leaves Walt isolated and alone.

Bant hangs his masculinity off his ability to fight, drink, and perform amazing feats. He is full of rage and sadness about his wife leaving him and her new relationship with the Rington's Tea Man. He tells tall tales about the fights he has been in and the fantastic things he has done, in an attempt to bolster his self-esteem. However, despite his fragile sense of self, he is an intensely loyal friend with a robust moral code, and Jack's affair wounds him deeply. He stands by Phil regardless of his feelings on homosexuality and is his most fierce and fearless defender.

Phil has a rooted sense of his masculinity that differs enormously from the other men in the play. He knows who he is and cares very much about his friends, and the many children he has given music lessons to. The attitudes of society towards homosexuality and in particular the community Phil is part of curtails his sexual life and forces him into secrecy. The friendships he finds in The Glee Club both sustain him and force him to deny a part of who he is.

All of the characters in *The Glee Club* also define their masculinity in part through their work. The job they do in the mines is dangerous, gruelling and dirty. Phil works in the office, but the others spend long shifts underground. They must trust each other, be brave, and not tolerate stupid mistakes. These ideas spill over into how they behave in the rest of their lives.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

I had a Ferguson transistor radio. I was tuned in to a change, a shift, somethin' blowin' in the wind. Music was on the move, and the swing, the shake, the sex of it was comin' through the airwaves.

Colin, Act 1, Scene 1

In 1962, the country was on the brink of an enormous cultural shift in which the younger generation (portrayed in *The Glee Club* by Colin, and the offstage characters of Sandra and Pam) would assert themselves through music, fashion and political protest. The generation of teenagers who grew up in the post-war period were very different from their parents, primarily due to the influence of the radically changing political and cultural context in which they grew up.

Teenagers of the 1960s were more free of the state-sanctioned restrictions imposed on their parents' generation by the Second World War. They no longer faced conscription or rationing and were beginning to get used to the 'Long Peace' which characterised the Cold War period between 1947 and 1991. With no immediate threat of another major war coming to British shores, and with more disposable income as a result of the post-war economic boom, young people were much freer to pursue their interests and sense of individuality. They did not have to prepare for becoming protectors of the nation as their parents had done.

The revolution in popular culture took off in October 1962 with the Beatles' first single, "Love Me Do", which heralded the brand-new era of the 'Swinging Sixties'. This decade saw young people begin to demand and command more power over their destinies than ever before; in music, art, clothing, entertainment and politics. Song lyrics, TV shows and fashion began to be far less deferential to the establishment, with rebellious young people criticising their politicians and public figures in a way that had never been acceptable before.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

Engaging with popular culture became even more effortless with technological advances like portable transistor radios, meaning that many teenagers like Colin could listen to music all day long. A vast increase in the number of households with a television, as well as the emergence of colour TV, affected the way people spent their leisure hours, allowing them to spend more time watching shows featuring celebrities.

However, not all parts of Britain changed with the same speed. Communities based around traditional manual work, such as mining towns like Edlington, were not as rapidly affected by cultural change as the cities. As Colin says in Scene 1, Act 1, *"the working men's clubs of South Yorkshire, where we played, were always about twenty years behind anywhere else."*

Colin desperately wants to be a part of the new world. He likes its sound, and he dreams of becoming a pop star like those he listens to on the radio and sees on TV. However, his storyline shows us that he is still bound in some ways by the more conservative social norms of the old world.

Traditional British moral code, influenced by the teachings of the Church, held that a couple should marry before having children. In spite of how Britain was modernising in the 1960s, traditional family values still heavily influenced the way people were expected to behave. This accepted morality becomes relevant for Colin and his girlfriend Sandra when she falls pregnant, as the pressure for them to get married and settle down together would have been great.

Abortion wasn't legal in Britain until 1967, so Sandra's decision not to keep the baby will have been a complicated and dangerous one. One of the reasons suggested in the play for Sandra's choice is that she doesn't want her pregnancy and the responsibility of marriage to stand in the way of Colin's pop star ambitions, but the text doesn't tell us whether she had other, personal reasons, or what they were. We could assume that she did have motivations of her own, but that perhaps Colin was not aware of them.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

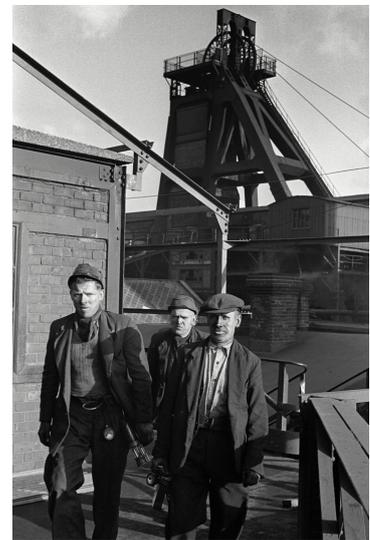
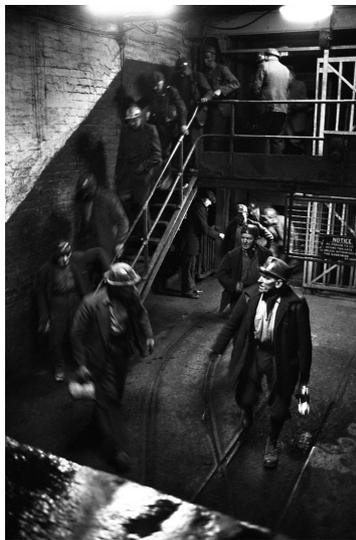
GENERATIONAL CHANGE

Ultimately, Colin gives up on his dream following the termination of Sandra's pregnancy, and his relationship with Sandra never recovers as a result of the guilt they both feel towards each other.

In writing Colin and Sandra's story in this way, Richard Cameron is perhaps asking us to consider how easy it really was for all young people to move forward into the modern world the 1960s created, how different that world really was, and whether it's genuinely possible to transcend the restrictions inherited from the world which came before.

Most of the characters in the play grapple with generational change, especially as it relates to their profession: in the years following the war, the mining industry was to undergo significant changes. As Colin explains at the end of the play, Thatcherism and pit closures in the 1980s would ravage Edlington and many towns and cities like it throughout Britain.

The Glee Club captures a moment directly before an enormous cultural shift, and in the decades to come, individualism and the power of the market would leave this generation of men behind. As much of the old order is swept away and the world opens up, much is won, and much is lost - it is for the audience to decide how they feel about both gain and cost.



L-R: Yorkshire Miners' Gala, miners exiting the lift cage underground, miners at the colliery, by Patrick Ward.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

FAMILY

I think I'm just kiddin' myself, aren't I? Find someone to make us all an 'appy family again. Wave a wand. Fairy fuckin' godmother.

Walt, Act 1, Scene 3

No family situation in *The Glee Club* is straightforward, and the play explores complex relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, and partners and ex-partners. For some, the spectre of family looming on the horizon exercises power over their story. All characters in *The Glee Club* are affected by the social expectations of the day, and we should consider what 'family' means within the world of the play, and what role it plays in our characters' abilities to make choices for themselves.

In the 1950s, there was a considerable stigma attached to having children outside of marriage, and although the two world wars had gone some way to change the perception of women in work (as many women began to work in manual jobs while British men were away fighting), there still existed a very traditional view of male and female roles in the family unit. Society saw husbands as the breadwinners who earned a wage to support their family, and wives were expected to take care of the children and run the household.

For Colin, Sandra's pregnancy suddenly conjures the image of a family unit which instantly places him in the roles of a husband and father who must take responsibility for his wife and child, regardless of whether or not they feel ready. The pregnancy jeopardises the plans Colin has for himself and his future, ideas which cannot survive the guilt he feels when Sandra chooses an abortion.

Walt's family unit has been rent apart, and he is desperate to fix it. After his wife's death, he sends his children to live with other families, a decision which he grieves, but which perhaps he came to for several reasons. These reasons could include a societal view that children needed a mother figure in their lives, and that single fathers did not provide good homes for children; a culturally-ingrained reluctance to seek help from his community in attempting to raise the children himself; and perhaps a personality trait unique to Walt which renders him incapable of taking responsibility for his family while he grieves for his wife.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

FAMILY

Homosexuality was illegal in Britain until 1967, and under no circumstances could two men build a home or family together out in the open in 1962. Phil cannot be honest about his sexuality, because if their relationships were discovered gay men faced arrest, and as well as being illegal, the social stigma towards homosexuality was incredibly strong. Phil seems to have an accepting relationship with his mother, who we know continues to ask him to accompany her to church even after his identity becomes widely known, and who eventually moves away with him.

In Act 1, Scene 5, Scobie asks Phil if he will be the Godfather to his fourth child. The possibility this opens up would have been hugely significant for Phil, as having a family and children of his own was impossible. However, when Scobie casts off Phil's friendship on discovering his identity, this possibility of a family and being a father-figure to a child is tragically ripped away from him.

Scobie is a loyal father and husband throughout the play, raising three daughters and taking care of his pregnant wife. He seems to enjoy family life, taking some banter from the other men about how he spoils his eldest daughter. The version of family life Scobie works toward appears to fit best with the traditional vision of family.

Both Jack and Bant's family lives are fractured. Bant has separated from his wife of eighteen years, but he is struggling to come to terms with her new relationship with the Rington's Tea Man, and his behaviour as he grieves his loss is often dishonourable. Jack indulges the fantasy of the doctor's daughter that he has nurtured since his youth, the betrayal of which steals the heart from his marriage.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

HOPES AND DREAMS

Each of the characters has an ideal vision of the future which drives them forward and informs the choices they make. A dream the men share is of putting on an even bigger, better concert than last year; bringing joy to their community, and perhaps also being able to bask in the glow of giving something of themselves to others through their music.

In the final scene, Colin tells us what happens to each man in the succeeding years. Through the staging and Colin's reverent last paragraph, this scene also paints a picture of the Glee Club's packed concert in 1961 as a kind of nostalgic dream; one to which none of the characters can return, but which had perhaps injected a sense of bolstering optimism into all the characters' hopes for themselves during the course of the play.

Walt dreams of one day being reunited with his children in a stable, loving home with a mother figure who can take care of them, but instead he has to live with the discomfort of being a proxy father figure to the children of the widow he is seeing, while knowing his son is unhappy in a children's home. He doesn't end up marrying the widow or reuniting with his children and resorts to living in a dream-world of his own invention.

Scobie wants a better life for his family, dreaming of buying a bigger house, new car and a static caravan to share with his friends if he "won the pools" (Act 2, Scene 4). We find out through Colin that Scobie does achieve these dreams, choosing to strive for loyalty to his family.

Colin's dream of being a pop-star dies, and he moves away from Edlington so he can escape the guilt he feels towards Sandra. He doesn't tell us very much about the life he leads at the end of the play, but we know that the pit has since closed, taking with it the "heart" (Act 2, Scene 8) of the community Colin had once loved.

Perhaps Phil's most pressing hope during the play is that he can stop the blackmail from his ex-partner, which risks forcing him to reveal his sexuality, and preventing him from continuing to work and channel his energy into the Glee Club's concerts. Underneath

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

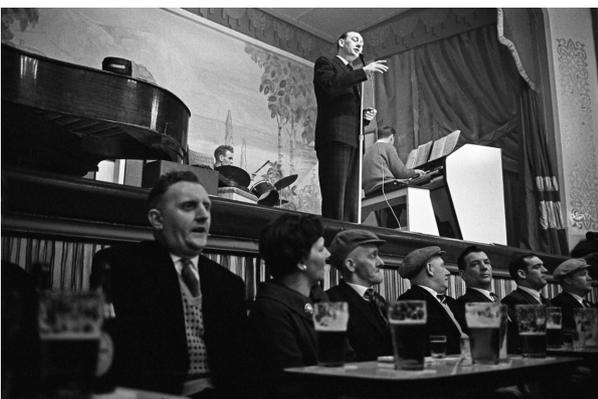
HOPES AND DREAMS

this, we can imagine that like many people, Phil dreams of having the freedom to find love and express it openly, but perhaps this hope would have been unrealistic even privately for Phil, due to the pervasiveness of the stigma against homosexuality in his world.

Bant hopes that his wife will one day return to him, but the way he expresses this in the play is often aggressive and bitter. He also perhaps makes dreams of his friends, placing them on pedestals of virtue which they can't fulfil. He feels betrayed by Jack, who he had hoped would be able to help him get his job back at the pit, but who is too occupied with pursuing a dream of his own to give him the help he needs. Despite his difficulties within his relationships, Bant's dedication to raising money for good causes reveals a deeply rooted dream of a world in which those in need don't have to go without, and everyone does their duty to help people around them.

Jack's dream of an affair with the doctor's daughter is a rekindled version of one which began in his youth, perhaps inspired partly by a desire to transcend his social class and be part of that different world. Indulging in this dream breaks his wife's heart, damages his friendship with Bant, and shakes the idea he had of himself as a man.

Although we see many dreams broken in *The Glee Club*, by ending on the perfect, shimmering image of last year's concert, the play celebrates the power of aspiration, and the value of continuing to strive, regardless of failure or success.



L-R: Listening to an entertainer at a working men's club in Horden, miners in helmets, by Patrick Ward.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ART

Music is... I'm a mining engineer because I was expected to be. I do this, I teach, because it means something, it makes sense of things.

Phil, Act 1, Scene 5

I soon realised that the songs were a part of who these people were, what they'd been through together.

Colin, Act 1, Scene 7

The characters in *The Glee Club* play music together, they listen to music for themselves, and they perform comedy skits with - and for – each other when they interact as friends.

Richard Cameron says in the introduction to the play that “for all their rough, coarse, dangerous lives and language, the sound that they produce on stage together is more than just good. They are a polished act.”

The Glee Club demonstrates the power of singing together as an act that heals these men and binds them together. With some of the men carrying severe trauma from World War Two, and all of them working in a dirty and dangerous environment, the act of taking time in their week to sing together is necessary to their survival.

They are practising for a gala that shares this music with their community and raises money for the most impoverished children in the village. The portrait of a community making art for and by itself, to an exceptional standard, pushes back on current pervasive and inaccurate narratives around the working class and their relationship with art.

The music and sketches illustrate the experiences they have had and help them to communicate their experiences with one another in a more light-hearted and indirect way, enabling them to express themselves with more emotional clarity than they might perhaps feel comfortable conveying through conversation.

THEMES IN "THE GLEE CLUB"

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ART

In this play, music gives some of the characters a deeper understanding of themselves, a notable example being Phil, who has a profound connection to music. In teaching, performing and listening to music, Phil can freely express elements of his inner life in a way that is not possible where his sexuality is concerned. In being a music teacher and expert musician, he can find elevation and respect in the eyes of his community, who he knows would deny him this were they to know of his homosexuality, making retaining his status all the more precious to him.

One of the most evocative scenes in the play is between Colin and Scobie (end of Act 1, Scene 3), when the two men act out a comedy sketch with one another entirely naked. They are impersonating Bant and a female sexual partner who is being spied on, to poke fun at Bant's claim that he once broke the nose of someone "pikin" at him and a girl. This scene is profound within the context of the play for several reasons.

We see how the act of this improvised performance - transcending the real situation of their physical nakedness and who they are to each other - enables them to speak about sexuality, make each other laugh, and ultimately helps them to bond with one other. In this scene, we see how utterly comfortable these men are in the presence of one other's bodies, a result of the logistic necessity of showering together at work when they leave the coal pit, which imparts a neutrality to nudity that many modern viewers might find unfamiliar.

This neutrality becomes particularly significant when the hostility and offence Scobie, in particular, feels towards Phil's homosexuality confronts the audience. Scobie experiences Phil's revelation in part as a betrayal of their trust and closeness, both emotional and physical.

Art elevates the friendships of the characters, provides them with an avenue for self-expression, and enables them to escape their realities and create dreams for themselves that extend beyond who they are.

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD CAMERON WRITER

How did you begin writing plays?

I was a Drama teacher for a number of years and there was very little around that seemed relevant to the lives of the youngsters I taught, so I began writing material for them. We entered a play for the National Student Drama Festival and it won several awards and went to Edinburgh representing the National Student Theatre Company. That gave me the boost to keep going.



What was your motivation to tell this story?

I lived next door to a pit village in South Yorkshire when I was growing up. My grandfather was a miner. I wanted to honour the men and the community before it became a lost world.

How do you feel *The Glee Club* fits in with your other plays?

I feel most comfortable writing about places I know, so almost all my work is set within a twenty mile radius of Doncaster. The idea for a play often comes from a newspaper article – I used to trawl old newspapers in the local history section of Doncaster Library – and I came across a piece about The Edlington Glee Singers – a group of miners from Yorkshire Main who in the fifties and sixties sang in the working men’s clubs . I couldn’t resist finding a story for them.

Why is music and comedy important to the narrative of the play?

The miners looked after one another, were like brothers. It was a hard and dangerous job. I felt that the music and comedy would counterpoint this. As I began writing the play I realized that the music and comedy of their ‘act’ would naturally spill into their everyday lives.

Why is theatre the right medium for this story to be told?

I never thought of it existing in any other form. I wanted the audience to experience six men singing just as they would have sung in the clubs. I wanted their larking about to be like dressing room banter, pit shower banter – you’re drawn in if the characters are right there in front of you.

ESSAY: "HOMOSEXUALITY IN 1962"

By DR HELEN SMITH, Historian of sexuality, gender, region and class in modern Britain

Philip Larkin began his poem 'Annus Mirabilis' with the lines:

*Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three*

This is often quoted to date the beginning of the sexual revolution, and the freedoms of the sixties, but Larkin was making a joke. He was poking fun at the idea that before the 1960s, British people were sexually repressed, and that from the 1960s onwards, this repression had turned into sexual abandon. In the history of people's intimate lives, the truth was much more complicated. The early 1960s were a strange time, caught between the post-war austerity of the 1950s and the approaching 'Swinging Sixties'. This was particularly the case in a northern town like Doncaster, well away from London, and Carnaby Street where our ideas of the sixties are usually focussed. With the hindsight of history, the first few years of the decade can be seen as a tipping point between the old fashioned and the modern, the repressive and the liberal, but, as *The Glee Club* so beautifully illustrates, this wasn't so obvious for people at the time.

The Glee Club tells the story of a number of difficult relationships: a young couple and a pregnancy outside of marriage, a failed marriage, an extra-marital affair, and most poignantly, evidence of a gay relationship used to blackmail one of the men involved. These relationships highlight the many ways that conservative legal and medical establishments could have devastating consequences on the lives of working-class people, a situation all too familiar through various government policies today. Although the contraceptive pill had been introduced in 1961, it was only available to married women until 1967, and only at the discretion of mostly male GPs. Abortion was illegal until 1967 and carried severe prison sentences. Because of this, many women became seriously ill, or died when forced to rely on backstreet abortions. Divorce was out of the reach of most working-class couples until reform in 1969 made it cheaper and easier. People were expected to make the best of it, regardless of feelings or desires – many of us are familiar with the phrase 'You've made your bed, you lie in it'.

ESSAY: "HOMOSEXUALITY IN 1962"

DR HELEN SMITH

In 1962, all forms of gay male relationships were illegal (lesbianism has never been illegal in Britain). In a society that has embraced gay marriage, it can be hard to imagine that until 1967, a man could be imprisoned for holding hands with, or kissing another man. Police forces used entrapment in public toilets and bars to target gay men, and private houses were raided for evidence of gay relationships such as love letters, and photographs. Private mementos of love became public when they were used in court, ensuring that men's lives and reputations were ruined. Unscrupulous young men often turned to blackmail to exploit their former lovers, or even entrapped gay men themselves. The landmark film, *Victim* (1961) starring Dirk Bogarde and Sylvia Sims gave a sympathetic portrayal of the issue, was the first English language film to use the word 'homosexual', and was given an X-rating for its trouble. It was only in 1967 that homosexuality was partially decriminalised under Wilson's Labour government, but men under 21, and men seen to be too public with their desires were still liable for prosecution. It took until 2000 for the gay and straight age of consent to be equalised at 16. With this legal background, it's no wonder that Phil is so frightened of his sexuality being revealed, and his blackmail is the key narrative drive of the play.

Social stigma could be as worrying as the law for gay men at the time. This is powerfully tackled within the play by the way that child abuse and homosexuality is linked in the minds of some of the characters. Phil is not just accused of having a relationship with a man, it is falsely suggested that his sexuality makes him a danger to the young boys in his church choir, and that he has behaved inappropriately with them. Although there is no truth to the offensive idea that homosexuality and child abuse are in any way linked, this did not stop the British right wing press popularising the idea from the 1950s onwards. Newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and *News of the World* routinely suggested that gay men were dangerous to children. Why did this happen? One reason for this is that the post-war period was typified by reconstruction after the uncertainty caused by the Second World War. In this environment, people were actively encouraged to settle down and have children, and there was even less of a place for those who deviated from this path – gay men became an obvious target, were perceived as a threat by the establishment, and much of the press collaborated in discrediting them.

ESSAY: "HOMOSEXUALITY IN 1962"

DR HELEN SMITH

The Glee Club beautifully depicts the humanity and common sense that guided many people's lives, and this is best illustrated by the range of reactions to Phil's 'coming out' as a gay man. Although Scobie reacts angrily to the news, displaying the kind of homophobia that might stereotypically be expected from a Yorkshire miner at the time, the reactions of the other men in the play are much more diverse. Colin is confused but, in his way, supportive. Jack and Bant are on Phil's side, and furious at Scobie's reaction, with Jack calling him a 'pathetic small-minded little bastard!' (Act 2, Scene 7). The majority of the men simply do not care, and the camaraderie that they have formed in the pit, and as part of the Glee Club, remains the most important thing. Who cares who you choose to love? Who cares what people get up to in the bedroom? After all, don't they all have something to hide in their private lives?

This is not a question of Richard Cameron painting his hometown in too rosy a light. Although Scobie's disgust was certainly common, my own research into sexuality and masculinity in South Yorkshire saw Jack and Bant's attitudes repeated time and again*. Working-class people were often too busy, and too practical to get caught up in intellectual debates about sexuality. People were tolerant of each other's differences as long as they kept to themselves, and didn't cause anyone else any trouble – this explains Jack's exasperation with Phil for naming his sexuality and 'coming out' to the other men. I found hundreds of examples of men like those in the play, particularly miners and steelworkers, who were caught having sex with other men by the police. Time and again, their work mates, bosses, and even wives and girlfriends stood up for them in court. When a particular miner was convicted during the 60s, very close to Edlington, he expected to lose his job. Instead, he was bought a pint by his mates, and told by his union rep, 'You've not done nowt wrong I've played with a bloke many a time'**. South Yorkshire was a region built on heavy industry, and hard, dangerous work. This gave men a security in their own masculinity that allowed for a surprising level of acceptance for what the establishment defined as illegal, and abnormal behaviour.

* Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class, and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895-1957* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

** Ibid, p.113.

ESSAY: "HOMOSEXUALITY IN 1962"

DR HELEN
SMITH

Phil's departure, and the disbanding of the Glee Club signal the end of an era, and the beginning of the slide away from older ties of working-class community. Emotional damage has been done, and social change gets in the way. This slide ended with the Miner's Strike in 1984 and 1985, and Thatcher's policies, which were designed to finish the unions, and break up traditional working class communities. Without well-respected work and opportunities, places like South Yorkshire became economically depressed, and even in 2019, many areas have not recovered. As a proud South Yorkshire woman, from a family of steelworkers and miners going back a hundred years, I recognise the humanity and pragmatism that runs throughout *The Glee Club*, and the area more broadly. I also recognise the devastation wrought upon working-class lives by unsympathetic, and elitist government policies. It's about time that a revival of this important play ensures that the rest of the country recognises this too.



Miners change out of their work clothes in the changing room after a shift, by Patrick Ward.

INTERVIEW WITH DYFAN JONES

MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND SOUND DESIGNER

Can you explain your role in the production and how you chose this career?

I am the Musical Director and Sound Designer. Aged 16, the choice was Music or Maths. I loved doing both but veered towards music because of my love for theatre and film. I started writing songs and underscores for shows at about 15 and loved it. I was really interested in the technology side of music and so, as the role of sound was becoming more important in theatre, I was well placed to get involved in sound design.



As a composer, MD and sound designer, I often wear two hats on productions if I'm employed for multiple roles at once, but I also love working alongside other sound designers and MDs.

What sort of music is in *The Glee Club*?

The Glee Club includes a wide range of musical styles, but they are all performed by a close harmony group with piano. The years following World War 2 are considered to be a golden age for song-writing. The songs written during those years were heavily influenced by Opera - Italian Composers in particular - full of romance and flair. *The Glee Club* is set in 1962, so we are bridging to the Rock 'n Roll years and "change is in the air".

What are the challenges for you on this show?

Close harmony singing is a difficult skill to master. Auditions have been tough for the actors. It is imperative that we do justice to the groups that were around at the time and so vocal control and the ability to master tricky arrangements is a must. I love working with actors that aren't trained musicians and I'm always amazed by their ability to learn new skills in such a short space of time. We are playing in venues of varying sizes and our ambition is to keep the sound completely acoustic. Working without radio mics will be a challenge in the larger auditoriums.

INTERVIEW WITH DYFAN JONES

MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND SOUND DESIGNER

How do you work with the director to create the production?

I read the script lots. I'm not great at working "off the page" and am much more comfortable in the rehearsal room, but having a clear grasp of the flow of the script and getting to know the characters is so important.

We discuss the musical material at length. We work on which songs sit nicely in a given scene - what are the lyrics? Who's involved? The style of the arrangements? Tempo, etc. All the musical arrangements are done before we start rehearsal and so we make sure all the music is doing the right job before we start.

The sound design tends to get planned during rehearsals. The director doesn't usually get involved in the system design but will be discussing sound effects and timings as they come up.



Brass band at the Yorkshire Miners' Gala, by Patrick Ward.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

Navigating your way through a scene can be daunting, which is why actors and directors use specific techniques to help them give the text shape and colour. This section of the pack will show you how you can employ *Stanislavski's* principles of *objectives*, *actions* and *obstacles* to help you when directing or acting a scene. Kate Wasserberg often employs these techniques when rehearsing plays, and used them with the actors in *The Glee Club*.

INTRO: HINGE POINTS

A 'hinge point' is the precise moment, line or event that changes the direction the scene is heading in. The first thing to do when working on a new script is to identify these moments.

Imagine that the story is a train, on a train track. It is heading full speed to the west. Then someone pulls a lever, a junction in the track shifts, and suddenly the train is headed north. This is a *hinge*. Think of it in terms of your own life: you and a friend are talking, and then they say or do something that profoundly shifts the topic and tone of your conversation, and makes you adjust your behaviour accordingly.

These shifts are always found in plays, especially where there is dialogue between two or more people. Identifying hinge points can help you to work out what characters want, and after a hinge point, characters often change or adapt their behaviour towards each-other. We'll talk more about this in a bit.

On the next page is an extract from Kate's script, with possible hinge points marked with double orange lines. The section between one *hinge point* and the next is called a *unit*.

The extract is from a scene early on in the play, where Phil is trying to persuade Jack to lend him some money from the Glee Club funds. Phil is being blackmailed by a former lover, but Jack doesn't know that, and as desperate as Phil is, he won't tell his friend why he needs the money. Jack is torn between wanting to help and not wanting to know more about anything Phil may have done wrong. Phil and Jack have never talked about Phil being gay.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

Act 1, scene 1 (extract)

Phil Have you ever stolen anything? Hinge point

Jack Probably. I remember a leatherin'.

Phil I stole some marbles from the teacher's desk once. I felt so guilty I put them all back the next day. Punished myself for months after. Every time someone knocked at our front door, I thought it was a policeman come to take me away.



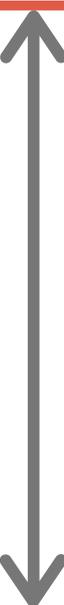
Unit 1

Hinge point

My mother doesn't know that some of her jewellery is gone. She doesn't have the occasion to wear it, you see. Not since my father died. I suppose she will find out it's gone one day. I'll say, 'You must have put it somewhere, Mother, for safe keeping and forgotten where. It'll turn up.'

Jack Phil please. Whatever it is, it's nothing to do with me. Don't make it my business.

Phil I could have altered the books and you would never have known. Instead, I'm asking you as a committee member and a friend, to grant me a small loan.



Unit 2

Jack I can't, Phil. You know I can't. Hinge point

Phil I founded this club.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

Jack Yes, on the principle that all proceeds go to them in need of –

Phil Exactly.

Jack As determined by majority vote of committee. Tell me what's goin' on.



Hinge point

Phil I didn't think I would find it necessary.

Jack I can't help you if you can't tell me!



Phil You can't help me, then.

Hinge point

EXERCISE ONE: HINGE POINTS

1. Read through the scene a few times. First, ignore the hinge points.

2. Once you've read it through a few times, discuss with your teacher and classmates whether you think the hinge points are in the right place. You can move them if they don't feel right!

A few examples of what hinge points can be are:

- a revelation of new information that one of the characters didn't know before
- a change of subject or tone
- a new character entering the scene

All of these things might cause one or more of the characters to change the way they are behaving or speaking.

3. When you're happy with where they are, talk about what exactly is changing in the scene at each hinge point.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

INTRO: OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES

After you've identified where the hinge points in the scene are, you can delve deeper into the **units** - the bits of dialogue between one hinge and the next - to reveal some information about why the characters are interacting with each other, and the way that they might be doing it. Every character's behaviour is influenced by the thing they want, how they are trying to get it, and what is stopping them from getting it.

A character's **objective** is the thing they want to get or achieve in that scene. Stanislavski also talks about **super-objectives**, which are the big-picture goals characters want to have achieved by the end of the play. In this pack we will mainly be focusing on the smaller-scale objectives within scenes, but it's a good idea to have a think about what your character's over-arching goals might be.

Sometimes characters' objectives within scenes are goals which they believe will help them to achieve one of their **super-objectives**. For example, a character's **super-objective** could be to find true love, but in one particular scene in the play, their objective might be to convince their friend to come with them to a party. This might play into the storyline of their super-objective, or it might be tangential. Either way, you can see how **objectives** have a much more short-term and immediate focus, and **super-objectives** are long-term.

A character's **actions** are the tactics they are using within a scene to try and get the thing they want.

A character's **obstacle** is the thing that is standing in the way of them getting what they want: usually the actions of another character, or their own attitudes or emotions which stop them from behaving in a way that would be more helpful to them.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

For every character, and every unit in the play, actors must ask themselves three questions:

1. What do I want from the other character? - This is your **OBJECTIVE!**
2. What am I doing to the other person to try and get the thing I want? - This is your **ACTION!**
3. What is in my way, that may stop me from getting what I want? - This is your **OBSTACLE!**

Of these three, the action is the most important, and it is vital to be precise when deciding what action you are using. An action always takes the form of a **transitive verb**, which is a doing-word that describes something that you want to do **to the person you are talking to**.

A way to remember transitive verbs is that it is something one does *to someone else*. 'Sad' isn't a transitive verb, but 'sadden' is. You might tell someone a piece of news in order to 'shock them', 'please them' or 'impress them'. The *shock*, *please* or *impress* is the action of the unit.

You can recognise and choose transitive verbs by asking yourself if they make grammatical sense in this format: I **[X]** you.

Examples:

I perplex you.	I bewitch you.
I tease you.	I anchor you.
I chase you.	I horrify you.
I reject you.	I soothe you.
I destroy you.	I incriminate you.
I defeat you.	I awaken you.
I numb you.	I corrupt you.
I stall you.	I enlist you.
I glorify you.	

TIP: The transitive verbs you choose for actions don't have to be naturalistic for the context of the scene. They just have to represent the *feeling* of what you're doing to the other person very accurately. It can be metaphorical!

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

As an example, here is Unit 2 from the extract with a suggested objective, action and obstacle for each character:

My mother doesn't know that some of her jewellery is gone. She doesn't have the occasion to wear it, you see. Not since my father died. I suppose she will find out it's gone one day. I'll say, 'You must have put it somewhere, Mother, for safe keeping and forgotten where. It'll turn up.'

Jack Phil please. Whatever it is, it's nothing to do with me. Don't make it my business.

Phil I could have altered the books and you would never have known. Instead, I'm asking you as a committee member and a friend, to grant me a small loan.

Jack I can't, Phil. You know I can't.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES FOR UNIT 2

Jack:

OBJECTIVE:

I want to stay out of this.

ACTION:

I *block* you.

OBSTACLE:

I care deeply about Phil and want him to be okay.

Phil:

OBJECTIVE:

I want Jack to loan me the money.

ACTION:

I *shame* you.

OBSTACLE:

I am ashamed.



Unit 2

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

EXERCISE TWO: OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES

Pair up and choose a character each. Have a go at deciding on objectives, actions and obstacles for the rest of the extract from Act 1, Scene 1 on pages 26 and 27 for your character. Write them all down below, and then also write the ACTIONS in the correct unit on the script on pages 26 and 27, so that you can see them when you read along.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES FOR UNIT 1

Jack

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

Phil

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES FOR UNIT 3

Jack

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

Phil

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND OBSTACLES FOR UNIT 4

Jack

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

Phil

OBJECTIVE:

ACTION:

OBSTACLE:

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

EXERCISE FOUR: PLAYING THE ACTIONS

Once you have answered your three questions and added your objective, action and obstacle for each unit, read the scene with a partner, **playing the actions**.

To 'play the action' means to deliver the lines while applying the transitive verb you've chosen, so that the way you perform accurately reflects what you're trying to do to the other person. What is it like to say Phil's line, "I'm asking you as a committee member and a friend, to grant me a small loan," while playing the action of '**I shame you**' towards Jack?

You should be able to perceive that the actions add a level of depth, perception, rhythm, and overall meaning which otherwise would be lacking. Despite the audience not yet knowing what is going on between Phil and Jack, the actions give the scene a clear emotional shape and give it that naturalistic element which Stanislavsky championed.

If, when you start to play the actions, you discover that one of the actions you have chosen doesn't exactly fit what you're really trying to do to the other person, you can decide to change it to something else. Playing around with the actions you've chosen is fun, and will help you to find the most truthful and interesting way of playing your character!

EXERCISE FIVE: KNIT IT ALL TOGETHER!

On the next page is another extract, between Jack and Phil again, from Act 2, Scene 2. Have a go at marking the hinge points, and add each character's objectives, actions and obstacles to this extract.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

Act 2, scene 2 (extract)

The rehearsal room. Day. Phil is sat at the piano, playing a classical number. Jack comes in, letter in hand. Phil sees him, but finishes off the piece.

Jack I've 'ad something sent to me. As secretary. A letter written by you, Phil. To some man.

He hands it to Phil. Phil looks at it.

Is it your writing?

Phil nods.

Jack Who is he?

Phil He was someone I knew. Someone I thought a great deal about.

Jack So I see. You lied to me, Phil.

Phil About my conduct, no. About what I am inside, you seemed to take for granted. I didn't feel it –

Jack You told me you paid money to stop lies being spread. You didn't tell me it was for the return of this!

Phil I suppose it's a love letter, isn't it? I went to see him when this started...I was worried for him as much as me. He told me he'd had some things stolen from his flat. Among them ... letters.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

UNITS, OBJECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND ACTIONS: HOW TO FIND THE 'HINGE'

Jack Letters? How many? And you believe it? Your letters were lifted by a burglar? It's some burglar blackmailing you? Come on Phil, please.

Phil I have to believe it, Jack. It's all I have. I knew one man. In my life, I knew a few months of –

Jack I don't want to know. I don't want to know what I think about this.

Phil It's evident that you've already made your mind up. I'm sorry, Jack, to be such a disappointment.

Jack So what do we do?

Phil I'm the guilty party here. I don't pass sentence.

Jack If there was just the one letter ... Where the others will go ...

Phil I expect to the other committee members.

Phil holds out the letter to Jack

Jack It's your letter. I've never seen it.

Phil Thank you.

END OF EXTRACT

Once you have found your actions, perform the scene in pairs in front of the rest of the group. Discuss the different choices you made and the effect it had on the scene. There is no right or wrong, just different versions of the performance based on the choices you have made.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

HOT-SEATING: OFFSTAGE CHARACTERS

There is only so much information that can be included within the text of a play. However, the world the play exists in, and the past experiences that each character has had extend outwards much further than is written in the text. It is the company of actors and their director's job to work out as much of this information as possible in order to give a realistic and interesting portrayal of the characters and their story.

Hot-seating is used in rehearsals to explore a character in more depth by creating these past events that aren't explicitly mentioned in the text. It can also be used to build a more fully-rounded world for the play by introducing us to offstage characters.

Here is how it works:

One person chooses to be a character mentioned in the play and is asked questions about events which are mentioned in the story, or which we can guess might have happened based on the text, but which aren't mentioned. The person being hot-seated must form their answers based on their knowledge of the play. So, you need to know the text quite well before you do this exercise, as you'll need to use clues and information that are included in the play to inform the extra details you make up as responses to the questions you are asked.

EXERCISE SIX: HOTSEATING

Hot-seat one of the unseen characters such as Brenda (Scobie's wife), Sandra (Colin's girlfriend), or Phil's blackmailer. What questions might you ask them that will add detail and colour to the world? What insights do they bring to the characters and the story?

EXERCISE SEVEN: DIARY ENTRY

By yourself, write a diary entry based on the story that materialises from the hot-seating.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

MAP-MAKING

Map Making is part of 'World Building', where we imagine a 360 degree, fully detailed environment within which to tell our story. The more we are all imagining the same thing and the more that the world we are imagining together is rooted in the text, the better.

Map making is also a great activity for the first week of rehearsals, because it turns frightening, abstract ideas like 'acting' and 'believing' into concrete, achievable tasks. This is because it provides details that we can all focus on and accept are real, rather than leaving it up to each individual person to try and act without knowing anything about the world their character inhabits.

EXERCISE EIGHT: MAP-MAKING

Divide into groups of 3-4 and take a large piece of paper and a pen. Each group chooses a location from the play. It could be big, like the village, or small, like the showers.

- 1 Start by going through the text and writing down every single fact you can find about that location. Don't add anything, make anything up, or miss anything out. This needs thorough detective work. Look for people mentioning that they need to drive to get somewhere, or that somewhere has an outside toilet, anything you can find. Make a list. For example, the list about the rehearsal room might start like this:
 - i. It is a shed
 - ii. It is large for a shed
 - iii. It is similar to a Scout hut
 - iv. It is a bit beaten up
 - v. It is next door to the clubhouse
 - vi. It is sometimes used as a function room
 - vii. It is sometimes used as a committee room
 - viii. There are stackable wooden chairs
 - ix. There is an upright piano
 - x. There is a dais
 - xi. There is a stove at one end.
 - xii. There is a bar next door.
 - xiii. There is a concert room next door.
 - xiv. There is a toilet outside the room.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

MAP-MAKING

- 2 Use the list of facts about the location to begin drawing a ground plan/map of the location, using a single-coloured pen (e.g. black). Don't make anything up in this step – only draw what you know is there from the text itself.
- 3 Using simple research and common sense, take a differently coloured pen and make logical assumptions about gaps in your map. For example, if you know there is an upstairs bedroom, and that houses of the type you're in usually have indoor bathrooms, you may add a bathroom on the upper floor, but you can't imagine something like a games room, or anything else that would seem unusual based on what the text tells you, and the real-world research you've done.
- 4 Add any other detail that you believe would be there in a third colour, restricting yourself to simple decisions rooted in what you have already learned.
- 5 Imagine your map is now three-dimensional on the floor of the room in which this workshop is taking place, and that you can move around it, pointing in various directions at what can be seen. Also start to think about what can be heard, smelt and touched. Find a partner, and take turns in showing each other around your location.
- 6 Each group shows the rest of the group around their location, describing in as much detail as possible what you can see - **but don't give away any context!** – for example, say, 'it is a large room with a low ceiling' not 'it is a classroom'. Each location should take up the entire room, unless it would be smaller than the room in real life (e.g. if it were a toilet cubicle).
- 7 Discuss with the entire group what you learned about the locations in the play and how it informed your knowledge of the story. What impact does it have when you know what someone's house looks like, or where they go to work?