

Theatre Programme Support Materials

Note to teacher: Each group will work collaboratively to produce a theatre programme for their play. Members of the group should take responsibility for particular pages in the programme, but they will need to agree on content and perhaps appoint an editor for their group who will settle any disputes and consult with the teacher on behalf of their group. (Each individual to produce their own biography, but the group can appoint someone to oversee this and ensure a degree of consistency regarding presentation and format.)

Teachers could call meetings with the editors throughout the session to receive updates on progress and address any issues that may arise. The editors cannot override consensual decisions made by the group and need to listen to concerns raised.

Theatre programmes are written for people who have already bought tickets for the play and they can normally be purchased at the theatre before the play starts or at the interval. People buy them to find out more about the play, to gain some insight behind the scenes, to learn a bit about the making of the play and the people who have contributed in various ways to producing the play.

In your groups, you will need to decide what you are going to include in your theatre programmes and who will be responsible for each section. You will need to consider what images (including maps) would be best for the pages for which you are responsible.

Below is a list of ideas that might feature in your programme. Each idea will be explored in further detail with hints on how to structure your writing to imitate the different styles required for the various features.

- Front cover
- List of characters and biographies
- Background
- Synopsis
- Other relevant information (Glenside, Stapleton Hospital)
- Possible interviews with a member of the cast
- Acknowledgements

Front cover

Theatre programmes are not normally free so customers need to feel that they were a worthwhile investment and there needs to be something to attract the buyer in the first place. The cover is often the first thing that people will see, so let's start there.

Your play will need a title. This might simply reflect the building/ area on which your play was based, e.g. 'The French Prison' or provide more of a clue about the angle your play might take e.g. 'War and Freedom'.

You need to give some thought to the font style, size, colour and position on the page.

THE FRENCH PRISON

The block capital letters appear to have been stamped and lack any fancy and unnecessary detail perhaps implying something of the conditions of the prison and the imposed authority. The straight lines might suggest the bars of a prison cell and the colours are those of the French flag. You might feel that the colour is too extravagant and that black writing on a white background is more effective and better conveys the bleak nature of prison life.

You will need to consider what illustration would be the most appropriate on your cover and how it reinforces the title. It may even be that your illustration combines with the text. You might exaggerate some of the letters to look more obviously like iron bars.

Some covers contain other bits of text, perhaps a quotation from the play,

"Education for everyone, not just the wealthy."

Or a couple of lines describing one of the characters ,

"How he managed to sleep amidst the disharmonious bleats, brays and honks was anyone's guess, but it wasn't for everyone

that isolated life, in the pound, at the edge of town amongst the stray animals."

Or a question directly addressing the audience,

"So how did Fishponds get its name?"

Cast list

This is fairly self-explanatory. It will be a list of characters and other roles involved in the making of the play accompanied by the names of people responsible for those roles.

Hannah More – **Jessica Innes**

Tutor – **Imran Khan**

Pupil – **Mohammed Farah**

Pupil – **Victoria Pendleton**

As well as actors you might want to show who was responsible for other roles. Sometimes it may have been more than one person, sometimes it might have been the entire group.

Directors – **Mohammed Farah and Victoria Pendleton**

Script writers – **Mohammed Farah, Imran Khan, Jessica Innes and Victoria Pendleton**

Costume design – **Imran Khan**

This should be arranged in a list for easy reference. People should be able to turn to this page and easily find out who played a particular character or who was responsible for set design.

Later in the programme you can have a page giving biographical information about members of your theatre company.

Biographies

People often buy theatre programmes chiefly to find out a bit more about the company members. Normally there is a photograph of each person with their name and the role they played, so you can easily identify them. It is also quite interesting to compare what they look like in real life with how they looked when in character.

Each person in the group can write up their own biographies. Pictures are optional, though it might be a nice idea to draw a self-portrait to include.

Tom Daley

Quarryman



The biography would contain a brief description of their current situation and a little bit of extra information to give readers a bit more of an insight into the person, highlighting achievements and awards. It would be written in what is called the third person, using pronouns **he** or **she** as if you were writing about somebody else.

Tom is a Year 7 student at Bristol Metropolitan Academy. Born and bred in Fishponds he has always had a real interest in the area's history.

He has always been very good at drama and in Year 6 he got 3 merits and got to stand up in assembly for his portrayal of the deputy head in his primary school's leaver's play.

The following paragraph would give details of previous performances or relevant work. You would only give the name of the play, you wouldn't need to provide the role played.

Recent theatre work includes: *Bugsy Malone* (English class, Bristol Met), *What happened to Henry VIII's wives?* (History class, Bristol Met), *Festival of lights* (R.E., Bristol Met), *Leaver's play* (Year 6, Primary School).

Background

You might want to give a bit of background to the play. Explain how you gathered the information and ideas for your play and perhaps some historical facts about your chosen building/ area.

You might find it useful to begin by referring to the older map (on the reverse of your question sheets) and describe what is shown there. You could include a version of your map in the theatre programme.

There are three buildings that show up as children's homes on the 1900 Ordnance Survey map.

Remember to make clear what is actually known and what we suspect, but do not have enough evidence to know for sure. Does the sentence below suggest that we *do* or *do not* know for definite who occupied the children's homes? Which words helped you to work this out?

It is likely that boys and girls would have been housed separately and the third house was probably for the person responsible for the orphans.

The background information is of a factual nature. The reader should be able to rely on the information being provided and it is likely that the reader will learn something from the background information that they did not previously know.

If you wanted to, you could mention ideas that you are pleased with or issues that you struggled with when making the play and how those issues were resolved.

One of our main challenges was to convey the range of animals that ended up at the pound. We eventually decided to...

Synopsis

This will be a summary of your play. It will not just be about the history, but may build on the background information and perhaps start with setting the scene.

The play is set at Stapleton Workhouse in 1841. The play opens with tired, miserable looking people dressed in rags ...

People reading this will not be have seen your play so you do not want to give too much away. You could go on to describe the rest of the opening scene or focus on a particular character.

Beth and her mother had had little choice, but to go in to the workhouse. Even though they knew that once they stepped foot in that awful place they were unlikely to ever be able to leave.

After reading the extract above, what questions do you think it might inspire the reader to ask? What kind of information might the reader now be interested in discovering in the play?

You can develop your synopsis in a similar way so that your readers are left wondering about certain aspects and wanting to see the play to solve the mysteries that you have presented.

Extra information

Glenside Hospital

On Monday, you all had a session researching the history of Glenside Hospital. We felt that more time would be needed to properly explore this subject and address the issues with the sensitivity and understanding that it would require. However, Glenside Hospital and the treatment of its patients who were deemed, by the standards of the times, to have various mental health issues is an important part of the local heritage.

If you chose to write on this subject, you would need to consider the language that you use to describe the patients. When the hospital was originally built, its patients were referred to as 'lunatics', 'idiots', 'imbeciles'. As a society, we are trying to no longer define people purely by their disability.

John was an imbecile.

It is very difficult to see beyond this label to any other qualities that John might have. In the sentence above he is reduced to just being an imbecile and we are given no other information about him. We also do not know what this actually means, what he is and is not capable of.

John had mental health problems.

By using the word 'had' as opposed to 'was' it is suggested that there was more to John. Saying that someone *has* a problem is very different from saying that they *are* a problem. The language used in Victorian times would not be appropriate today, but you may want to convey the attitude of the time and how this was reflected in the language that was used. To use the archaic terminology you may have identified in your research, make sure you use quotation marks and clarify that this was the language of the time.

The points raised here are also relevant to the group who focused on Stapleton Workhouse. If they wanted to include information about its later usage they might express it in a similar form to the following sentence, clearly indicating through the use of capital letters that this was the name of the institution and not their own choice of wording.

Stapleton Workhouse later became the Stapleton Institution for the Maintenance and Workshop Training of Certified Mental Defectives.

For both Glenside and Stapleton Hospital you can refer back to your notes and provide the answers to the questions that were posed. You could either provide both the questions and the answers so it is laid out like an interview or you can organise the answers into full sentences and produce a couple of paragraphs on the subject.

Interviews

You could structure an interview with a member of the cast. You would need to write 10 questions for them to answer based on the play. Below are a few possibilities that you might want to include and build on.

- How long have you lived in the area for?
- What aspect of the area's local heritage do you find the most interesting and why?
- What aspect of your performance are you most happy with and why?
- Were there any problems when making your play? If so, what were they and how were they resolved?
- Which other performance did you most enjoy and why?

Acknowledgements

It is always nice to say thank you and to acknowledge people that have helped along the way. There might be someone outside of school that may have contributed in some way, perhaps providing part of the costume or a prop or perhaps further insight into your local heritage. You might want to mention your class teacher.

You might want to include the logo for Bristol Metropolitan Academy as a way of promoting your school. Below are various logos linked to this project that you can include if you wish.

The acknowledgements might appear on the inside of the front or back cover.

Myers-Insole Local Learning, Know Your Place, English Heritage

