

# A LEVEL DRAMA & THEATRE

SUMMER WORK

“There is no formula to the way we make theatre. However, it always starts with the story. No, it starts before then. It starts with an itch, a need, an instinct.” Emma Rice - *Kneehigh*

# EXPLORING AS A THEATRE CRITIC

Watching, analysing and evaluating live theatre is an essential element of the A Level course. Firstly, you will have to write a live theatre evaluation as part of the final written exam. Secondly, watching live theatre exposes you to a great range of theatrical genres and dramatic conventions to apply to your own performance work.

For Activity 1, we would like you to watch a (recorded) live production from the National Theatre Collection. You can choose the production which most appeals to you. Three of our top picks are included right. Why not watch the trailers to make your choice...

In response to your chosen piece of live theatre, you should write a theatre review (no more than 1000 words). You should aim to include reference to: director's aims, acting & characterisation, staging & set, lighting, sound, costume. Don't be scared of offering your opinion!

A comedy: One Man, Two Guvnors



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MM6hSr9eFo>

A tragedy: Medea



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR9zX0Ph7II>

A narrative: Small Island



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImbiMn6CxBkY>

See National Theatre Collection login instructions on the next slide  
– please read carefully

# NATIONAL THEATRE COLLECTION

The National Theatre is now offering username and password access to the National Theatre Collection. Plays can be accessed remotely ensuring students studying from home can still watch them.

Your access details are: <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com>

**Username:** 9Pj!3Fu(zz

**Password:** 6Da@9Je(o@

(The Log in button is in the top right-hand corner of the landing page. Please insert your username and password to left-hand option of the login pop-up.)

Please ensure you are typing the credentials in rather than copying and pasting them as this can insert invisible spaces which invalidate the details. These should be entered under the 'access log in' and not the 'personal log in'. If you have any difficulties please test in another browser as some are known as having issues.

**These login details must not be offered to anyone external to your institution or posted on social media.**

Please note the free access is only to the National Theatre Collection whilst Drama Online is made up of 11 collections in total which are only available via subscription.

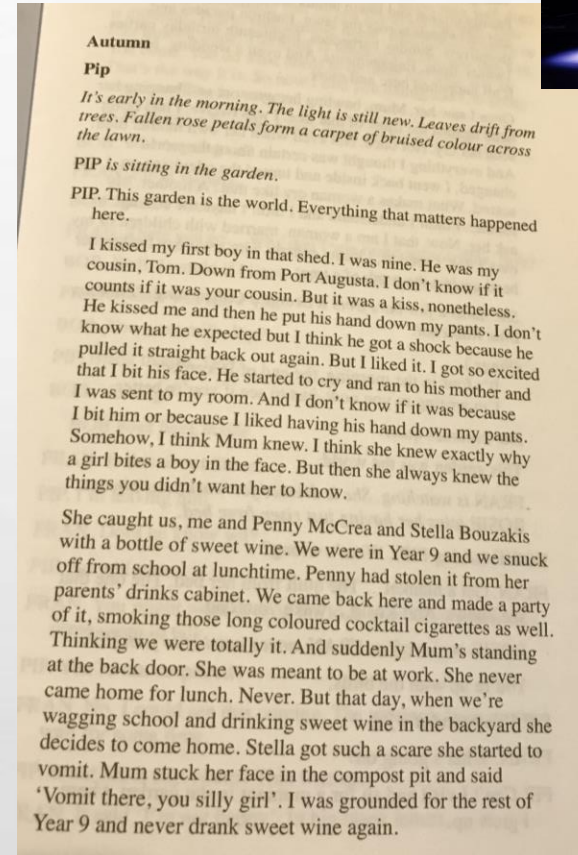


# EXPLORING AS A SOLO PERFORMER

We would like you to select, learn and rehearse a 1 - 2 minute monologue from a play of your choice. *Make sure it is from a play rather than a film.* You can use an extract from a play text of your choice. Alternatively, there are three pieces on this slide and the next one from *Things I know to be true* by Andrew Bovell. If you choose one of these, you can find out more about the play in production at:

<https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/frantic-digital/things-1>

In rehearsal, make sure you consider your use of: staging, voice, movement, communication with the audience.



## Autumn

### Pip

*It's early in the morning. The light is still new. Leaves drift from trees. Fallen rose petals form a carpet of bruised colour across the lawn.*

PIP is sitting in the garden.

PIP. This garden is the world. Everything that matters happened here.

I kissed my first boy in that shed. I was nine. He was my cousin, Tom. Down from Port Augusta. I don't know if it counts if it was your cousin. But it was a kiss, nonetheless. He kissed me and then he put his hand down my pants. I don't know what he expected but I think he got a shock because he pulled it straight back out again. But I liked it. I got so excited that I bit his face. He started to cry and ran to his mother and I was sent to my room. And I don't know if it was because I bit him or because I liked having his hand down my pants. Somehow, I think Mum knew. I think she knew exactly why a girl bites a boy in the face. But then she always knew the things you didn't want her to know.

She caught us, me and Penny McCrea and Stella Bouzakis with a bottle of sweet wine. We were in Year 9 and we snuck off from school at lunchtime. Penny had stolen it from her parents' drinks cabinet. We came back here and made a party of it, smoking those long coloured cocktail cigarettes as well. Thinking we were totally it. And suddenly Mum's standing at the back door. She was meant to be at work. She never came home for lunch. Never. But that day, when we're wagging school and drinking sweet wine in the backyard she decides to come home. Stella got such a scare she started to vomit. Mum stuck her face in the compost pit and said 'Vomit there, you silly girl'. I was grounded for the rest of Year 9 and never drank sweet wine again.



This garden is the world.

Family cricket and totem tennis tournaments. Hey Presto! and cartwheels across the lawn. Fashion parades and sleepovers. Sunday barbecues. Eighteenth birthday parties. Twenty-firsts. Engagements. And even a wedding. Mine. It all happened here and more.

Once I saw her, Mum, bawling her eyes out and banging her head against the trunk of that tree. I was twelve. I had never seen her cry. Not once. Not even when her own mother died. And everything I thought was certain about the world changed. I went back inside and turned the television on. I was scared. What makes a woman cry like that? A mother. My mother. I didn't understand and I didn't have the courage to ask her. Now, that I am a woman, married with children of my own I don't need to, I know exactly why a woman bashes her head against the trunk of a tree.

*She hums a few bars from a Leonard Cohen song: 'Famous Blue Raincoat.'*

*(Sings.)*

It's four in the morning, the end of December  
I'm writing to you now, just to see if you're better

*She becomes quiet.*

This garden was the world.



# EXPLORING AS A SOLO PERFORMER

MARK. Mia.

*Transition – MARK picks up the suitcase.*

I hear the sound of the horn and I know that it's time to go. I wish it was a taxi and that the goodbyes were over but Dad has insisted on taking me to the airport. Rosie comes too, of course. She's at the wheel. Dad is in the front passenger seat. So I sit in the back, which makes me feel like a child again, which I resent a little. Dad wants Rosie to take the coast road. She insists on taking the expressway. There is a kind of useless argument. A stand-off, that you would only tolerate with members of your own family. Rosie wins. She can be surprisingly stubborn. So we take the expressway only to discover that there are roadworks in progress so it takes longer than usual and Dad gets this 'I told you so' look on his face. And Rosie is reduced to a silent kind of rage. And I'm sitting in the back seat looking out the window thinking just how ugly the road to the airport is.

Mum is not with us. She's at work. We have hardly spoken. Our farewell was brief and hard. We both tried to outdo each other with an 'I am Still Angry With You' face. But she won. She always wins that game. But I felt the strength in her final quick embrace before she turned away and I thought it's going to be okay with her. That one day she will soften. One day she may even want to get to know... Her.

I want them to drop me at the airport and keep going. I want this goodbye to be over. I beg Rosie with my eyes. She gets it but airport farewells are still a big deal for Dad and he insists on coming inside and walking me to the gate. There is mayhem at security as he sets off the alarms. How a man can have so many pieces of metal about his person is a mystery to me but given that my time as a man is finite it's not a mystery I need to give much further thought to.

At the gate I tell Dad that I will come home soon to visit. And he tells me that he'll come to see me in Sydney as soon as I have settled in. Both of us know that neither of these things will happen but pretending they will seems to make the parting easier. I linger in his embrace knowing that it will be the last time I will be held by him, as a man, and then he does something that takes my breath away. He kisses me on the lips. And it almost does me in. It is so intimate. And I have never loved him more.

And I look back from the gate and he has broken. He is weeping. Rosie is holding him. She has him. I have to look away. I have to look ahead. I have to keep walking. My father's grief is a price I am prepared to pay.

The plane turns down the runway, increases its speed, lifts off the ground and as it makes its ascent I look down upon the city where I grew up, and steel myself against memories, against history and against the man I was. By the time I land in Sydney, Mark Price will just be someone I used to know.



ROSIE. Her shift finished at 3 a.m. She was in the car and on the road by 3:05. She was tired. It had been a difficult shift, the usual shortage of beds and juggling of patients but they had also lost someone that night. A woman she had let herself get close to. She had allowed herself a moment's

reflection on the passing of time before she steeled herself against it and got on with the night.

She was travelling down the expressway. She was tired. She was thinking about her kids. She was worried about me, being on the road alone, wondering if I'd get there alive, forcing herself not to think the worst but thinking it anyway. She was worried about Pip. She felt guilty that she had still not answered her letter. But she wasn't much of a writer and wasn't sure that she could say what Pip needed to hear, anyway. She was worried about Mia. She regretted the things that were said between them and the coldness of their parting. She felt her bottom lip quiver when she thought of her alone in Sydney. She'll call her in the morning, just to hear her voice. She was still cross with Ben. And found a way to let him know it on most days of the week. She wondered if she had been too soft with him and let him get away with things that she wouldn't have stood for from the others.

She thought about love and how sometimes you could give too much and sometimes you couldn't give enough and that knowing the right place in-between wasn't easy. And she thought about Bob. He'll still be asleep. She looked forward to crawling into bed beside him. She loved the warmth of him in the morning.

She was thinking of all this when her eyes closed, just for a moment. She veered off the inside lane and hit the concrete divider before flipping the car. She was crushed on impact. She was dead on arrival at the hospital where she worked.

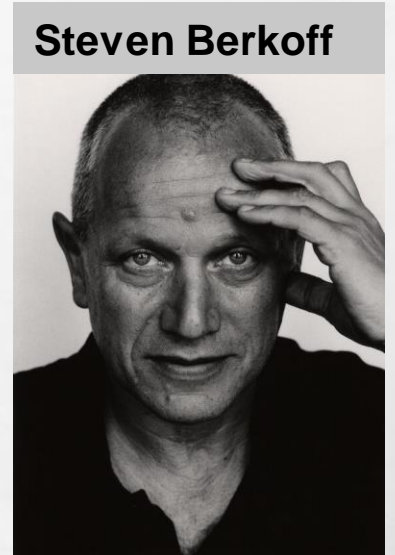
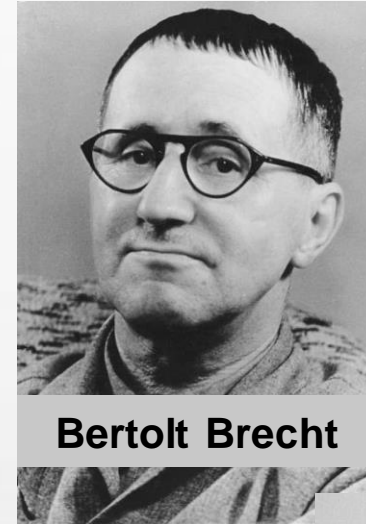


# EXPLORING AS A RESEARCHER

The theory and practice of theatre practitioners is key to your creation of devised drama and interpretation of scripted drama at A level. The list of theatre practitioners is constantly changing and evolving, as people are always creating new work and coming up with new thoughts and methodologies for theatre and performance. However, there are a number of theatre practitioners whose work will give you a firm basis from which to explore different types of theatre.

We would like you to research and create a PowerPoint based on the work of *one* of the following theatre practitioners: Bertolt Brecht, Constantin Stanislavski, Steven Berkoff or Antonin Artaud.

Make sure you include reference to: theatre background, dramatic style, actor/audience relationship and key rehearsal techniques.



# EXPLORING AS A READER

Reading and exploring play texts is central to the A Level course and we would like you to read the first set text we will study, *Equus* by Peter Shaffer. The play examines the actions of 17-year-old Alan Strang: a boy who has inexplicably blinded six horses with a metal spike. As the play develops, an overworked psychiatrist, Martin Dysart, patiently delves to uncover the motives behind the boy's hideous action whilst simultaneously discovering his own hidden self.

Buy (or borrow) and read the set text: *Equus* by Peter Shaffer (Penguin Classics ISBN 9780141188904).

