

Unit 1: Fragile Earth

Programme of Study coverage	
<p>Explorative strategies: still imaging, thought-tracking, cross-cutting, role-play, narrating</p> <p>Drama mediums: props, make-up, lighting, sound, music, spoken language, mime, costume, mask</p> <p>Drama elements: contrasts, symbols, conventions</p>	
Stimuli	
<p>Newspaper article: <i>The Sun</i> 31 May 2008 (SB page 90)</p> <p>Artefacts: Photographs of 'Big Mac'; Western jewellery; tribal spear; primitive decoration (SB page 91)</p> <p>Brochure: Holiday brochure advertisement</p> <p>Magazine: Any magazines whose target audience is fashion-conscious young people</p> <p>Internet 'blogs': printed in this scheme of work</p>	
Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
To understand how to use drama strategies to explore important issues about our endangered environment	Can employ a range of strategies effectively to explore the environmental issues from a stimulus
To know how to use still image, thought-tracking and spoken language to explore reactions to the discovery of the Yanomami tribe	Use images, thought-tracking and spoken language to create drama that explores reactions creatively
To know how to use cross-cutting to examine the inherent meanings in the stimulus	Be able to identify significant points for cross-cutting in order to create impact and meaning
To understand the term juxtaposition as a technique for connecting ideas and exploring contrasts	Can discuss how juxtaposition is used in drama to draw attention to important issues. Use the technique creatively in drama work
To understand how the drama medium can be used to accentuate contrast or to add atmosphere	Select aspects of the drama medium in creating atmosphere and to highlight contrast

Activity 1: newspaper article (SB page 90)

Stimulus: Article from *The Sun*, 31 May 2008.

The newspaper article recounts the sighting of a tribe, the Yanomami, in the Amazon rainforest. The article highlights the exceptional remoteness of the tribe and the awe experienced by the plane passengers at this sighting. The Yanomami culture has remained largely unchanged since the Stone Age and prior to 1950 they had no contact with the outside world. This section of the scheme of work explores how westerners have contributed to the destruction of the tribes in the Amazon rainforest.

1. Read the newspaper article with students and give additional information about the Amazon environment and the Yanomami tribe. Why are the passengers in the plane so amazed? What might the tribesmen think about the plane?
2. In groups of four or five create a still image depicting the moment when the Yanomami see the plane. Recap the need for levels, the suggestion of movements/gestures and facial expression in an effective still image.
3. Add thought-tracking to the still images to suggest the emotions of the Yanomami. Ask students to consider how to use spoken language effectively to communicate the reactions and feelings succinctly.
4. In the same groups role-play the conversation in the plane when the passengers see the tribe. Discuss the possible reactions. When did the passengers realise what they were seeing? Advise students to think about how the spoken language will differ from the thoughts of the tribe. Remind students that the use of gesture will be important as movement is limited by the location in a small aircraft.

Documentary response notes

- Draw a stick figure sketch of the still image and add thought-tracking in speech bubbles. Note underneath the reasons for the choices and the meaning intended.
- Make a note of some of the dialogue used in the plane conversation. Comment on the choice of spoken language.

5. Cross-cut from the Yanomami still image and thought-tracking to the conversation in the plane. What are the significant differences in movement, gesture, spoken language and emotional response? How did the drama work communicate these differences?

6. Evaluate the work:

- the differences in spoken language in the thought-tracking and the plane conversation
- movement and gesture in the still images; differences in the plane role-play
- how the cross-cutting created meaning: Why did you decide to cross-cut at key moments?

Documentary response notes

- Write down two aspects of the cross-cutting that you thought worked well in your own group or in another group.
- How did your group use suggestions from the evaluation to develop the drama further?
- Draw and annotate a storyboard for the cross-cutting exercise.
- Indicate the use of spoken language and thought-tracking.
- Discuss the decisions you made in your group and analyse the effectiveness of the choices.
- Comment on the value of the exercise in exploring the stimulus and communicating the meaning.
- Discuss how your judgements in relation to selecting specific moments for the cross-cutting reflected the central principles of your drama work.
- Ensure that you articulate what you have learned through undertaking this work.

Research

Find out more about the lifestyle of the Yanomami tribe. Why are they threatened by western acquisitiveness? See www.survival-international.org/tribes/yanomami.

Activity 2: Stimulus: artefacts (SB page 91)

The artefacts can be photographs or real articles. This session examines the contrasts and connections between the lifestyles and culture of the Amazon tribe and young people in western society.

Artefacts:

- 'Big Mac' burger
- tribal spears
- ornate western gold jewellery or 'bling'
- primitive decoration made from berries and feathers.

1. Discuss the following questions with students.

- Where are they from (place and time)?
- Who used/ate/wore/made them?
- How were they made?
- Why were they made?

Students can be encouraged to reflect on the links between the artefacts, for example, the wearing of jewellery in both tribal and western culture. The beefburgers that we eat could be from cattle farmed on cleared areas of the Amazon rainforest.

Activity 3: Making connections (SB page 92)

1. Introduce the term juxtaposition as a technique for connecting ideas and creating meaning by presenting two scenes or images one after the other and allowing the audience to make the connections. The following activity is an application of this technique.

In groups of four or five, possibly the same as those for the associations exercise, use the ideas triggered by the artefacts as starting points for the drama. Aim to use juxtaposition to denote meaning.

The key strategies and elements could be role-play, cross-cutting and contrasts and possibly still images with thought-tracking and mime linked by narration.

- You might want to give students the following as examples:
- Western students buying beefburgers after a night out (cross to)
- Yanomami tribespeople hunting for food or struggling with diminished water supply (cross to)
- Western students buying 'bling' for a party
- Yanomami suffering sickness brought in by the miners.

Documentary response notes

- Draw a mind map or diagram that captures thoughts and responses.
- Show how ideas were communicated.
- Write the script, or storyboard what you have created.
- Analyse the decisions about form and structure and choices of explorative strategy.
- Add comments that show how your ideas were communicated.
- Note what was learned through the drama work.

1. Students could use lighting to bring out the contrasts between the scenes. For example, use harsh, stark shop lighting for the fast food outlet and contrast this with a gobo and green gels to indicate the rainforest canopy in the Yanomami setting.
2. Students might also add sound, using percussion, vocal sound or recorded effects. Music could create mood and atmosphere e.g. a modern track, possibly indicating a radio, in the western scenes. Contrast this with sounds of the rainforest or tribal music played on wind instruments.

Activity 4: Stimulus: holiday brochure (SB page 93)

This session explores advertisers' images of perfect people and perfect places and the reality, which can be very different.

1. Students examine the holiday brochure image. Discuss the impressions and create a series of still images with captions that capture the essence of the advert. Share and evaluate these, focusing on the meanings created.
2. Give students some stark facts about the tourist industry - these could be given out on cards or projected onto a screen or interactive whiteboard.

Some examples:

- The average British household spent £1,801 on holidays in 2007, 52.6% more than in 2001.
 - Tourists consume over 440 litres of water per day - almost double what the inhabitants of a Spanish city use. This can result in water shortages for local people.
 - Large cruise ships produce more than 70,000 tonnes of waste each year.
3. Working in groups of five or six create a series of contrasting scenes, thus highlighting the environmental realities behind tourism.
 - Create a TV advert for a holiday in the destination shown. Add a voiceover to persuade viewers of its attraction and value.

- Create a TV advert for an ecotourist destination, where the culture of the people is protected.
- Role-play a scene where a family or friends are packing for their holiday.
- Role-play a scene where a group of young tourists treat a local waiter inconsiderately.
- Create a scene where a local guide shows tourists around a sacred site.
- Role-play a scene showing the tour guide remembering the site before tourism came to his village.

Activity 5: Evaluating your work

- What was discovered through this exploration work?
- Can drama change people's views?
- Why is drama a powerful medium for confronting issues?

Documentary response notes

- Record the comments from the evaluation.

The following additional Teacher Guide activities can add value to students' explorations.

Activity 6: Stimulus: Fashion magazines

This stimulus examines attitudes to cheap fashion items and the exploitation of workers in the developing world.

3. Distribute a number of current magazines aimed at the youth market, containing fashion pages. In groups, the students discuss the fashions for two or three minutes. Now ask them to select one image and consider who would be involved in taking this photograph.
4. In groups of four, five or six, depending on the number of people in the photograph, create a still image that includes the photographer.
5. Use the photograph as a starting point for a piece of drama that explores the fashion industry's objective to tempt young people to buy cheap fashion. How are the models treated? What conversations might they have during the shoot?
6. Working in larger groups:
 - Create a fashion show aimed at fashion-conscious young people. Roles might include: the compere, who describes the garments; the models; photographers; and the audience.
 - Use the convention of freezing the action and spotlighting key characters using thought-tracking to reveal their feelings.

Students should consider:

- how language creates atmosphere and impact: the compere's lively language might make the audience feel excited and enthusiastic.
- how movement will suggest character: gestures and small movements may convey the mood of the seated audience; models walk in a particular way to show the clothes successfully.

Documentary response notes

- Make a note of the structure of this piece of drama.
- Sketch the images from the freezes and add the thoughts.
- Note reasons for the decisions made.

Research

Find out more about the ethics of the fashion industry. Do overseas workers receive a fair deal? How do low-price outlets keep costs down?

This work can be extended using costume and music.

- Students select items from their own wardrobe for the fashion show and add.
- Music and lighting create mood and atmosphere. (For example, a follow spot to follow the models, a glitter ball lit with a single spotlight to add glamour.)

Activity 8: Stimulus: Internet blogs

Recent TV documentaries have prompted a major debate on the fashion industry and the use of child labour. Here are some Internet 'blogs' in response to the programmes:

I find it shocking that there are children in this world sitting day after day, sewing, checking and preparing clothes to feed our addiction to cheap fashion.

These retailers are making money because people keep buying. Until the public stop supporting them, it will carry on. Let the backlash begin...

Whether we feel bad about it or not, exploitation like this is always going to go on.

7. Use forum theatre to examine the connections between the blogs and the work from the fashion magazine.

Scenario:

- Set in a well-known high street shop, noted for its cheap yet fashionable clothes.
- A documentary maker asks awkward questions of a shopper about the ethics of buying clothes made in foreign sweatshops.
- The shopper defends his/her right to buy cheap clothes: it is not his/her responsibility to ensure that they are ethically made.
- A 'team' who can stop the action and give advice or take over a role supports each character.

Documentary response notes

- Script a section of the forum theatre in which you played a role.
- Comment on this use of forum theatre as a technique to create meaning.

1. In groups find a way of using the strategies, elements and medium of drama to communicate a dilemma or to highlight a contrast or conflict raised by this stimulus.
2. Present and evaluate the work. How did this exploration facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues raised in this project?

Unit 2: *The Crucible*

Programme of Study coverage

Explorative strategies: role-play, narrating, forum theatre, marking the moment
Drama mediums: movement, voice, spoken language, gesture, set, costume, lighting, props, space and levels
Elements of drama: climax, anti-climax, contrast, rhythm
Resources: stage lighting or torches, website addresses and texts for historical research, texts/information about design

Learning objectives

Learning outcomes

To understand the context of the play and to know how the Salem witch trials provide the setting for the play	Apply knowledge of the historical context to exploration of the play text
To know how to explore the background to the play through role-play and the drama medium	Create roles with imagination in examining unseen events. Be able to use the drama medium to enhance the atmosphere
To understand how narration can complement role-play in exploring the plot	Inventively intersperse narrating with role-play in exploring the plot
To know how aspects of the drama medium - voice, movement, silence and pause - can reflect power and fear	Select aspects of the drama medium to create compelling drama

To understand the ways that contrasts, rhythms and dramatic climaxes can be created	Work inventively on the interpretation of text to create dramatic tension and build climax
To know how to explore moral dilemma through forum theatre	Participate as performer or spectator in forum theatre, giving advice and responding to suggestions that deepen understanding of the moral issues
To understand the role of a designer of historical drama and know how to work creatively as designer	Design set and costume for a play set in an historical period to reflect the era, characters and themes

Activity 1: Exploring the background to the play (SB pages 134-135)

1. Discuss the context of the play, enabling students to engage with the beliefs and religious restrictions of the period. If possible, show images of Puritan America and the Salem witch trials. This might be via PowerPoint, film or history books. Ensure that students have at least a basic understanding of the plot, themes and characters within the play before starting this activity. They might read the play or watch the film.
2. Act 1 deals with the immediate aftermath of the girls' actions. Exploring the events that provide the focus of the play's debate can help understanding of the characters' emotions and motivation.

Note: We have suggested two different gender-specific scenarios. There is no implication that they should be delivered in this way; the intention is to provide choice. In a mixed gender class, you may use both scenarios simultaneously. The first scenario (*A*) is also provided on pages 134-135 of the Student Book; the second scenario (*B*) does not appear in the Student Book, but can add value to students' explorations.

A. In groups of seven ask students to take on the roles of the girls who experiment with witchcraft in the woods.

- Abigail (the ringleader)
- Betty (the youngest)
- Mary Warren (the most nervous)
- Mercy Lewis (strong minded)
- Susanna Walcott
- Ruth Putnam
- Tituba

Role-play the scene, showing how spoken language can demonstrate a character's feelings. Students should consider how language could reflect the period.

Use stage lighting or torches to create the mood in the drama space and think about using vocal sound - e.g. humming.

B. In groups of four role-play a scene where the following characters are discussing the rumours about witchcraft that are gathering force in Salem.

- Thomas Putnam (wealthy and domineering)
- Mr Collins (claims to have seen Betty fly)
- John Proctor (sensible - thinks it is nonsense)
- Giles Corey (an old man, inquisitive)

Students should aim to show how rumours spread through gossip but are fuelled by men like Putnam who do not trust Reverend Parris.

Consider the use of spoken language to create character and status. You could select lines spoken by the characters in the play.

Evaluation

- How did the drama medium (lighting, spoken language and movement) create the mood or signify emotion and status?
- How did this activity assist understanding of the feelings of the characters at the start of the

Documentary response notes

- Note some examples of spoken language that portrays character.

Activity 2: Using narration and role-play to develop understanding of plot (SB page 136)

1. Students work in groups of three as Abigail, Mary Warren and a narrator.
2. Role-play a scene where Abigail confronts Mary Warren after they have run away from the woods. Abigail threatens Mary because she thinks that Mary will tell the truth about what happened. Abigail intends to invent a lie.
3. The narrator comments on the action, rather than simply telling the story. Students can be encouraged to experiment with the language and style of Miller's characters.

For example:

Abigail: (grabbing Mary's cloak as she flees from the woods) You speak of this in the Proctor house and I you will feel the weight of my wrath on your head, Mary Warren. You be a terrible coward.

Mary: (shaking off Abigail's grasp) Leave me alone, Abby! I did nothing. Why should I be blamed? You made us do it Abby!

Narrator: Mary Warren wants to escape punishment, but will her fear of Abigail be too great? Abigail is a strong character - all the girls fear her.

Students can recreate other scenes in the same way, e.g. Thomas Putnam questions Mercy when he hears about the night's events. You may wish allow students to choose a scenario to explore.

Evaluation

- How did using role-play explore the character's motivation?
- What did you learn about the questions raised in the play through this type of narration?

Documentary response notes

- Write a few notes to describe one character's motivation.

Activity 3: Development work on the play text (SB page 137)

1. Discuss the structure of Act 1. The playwright explores the consequences of the girls' activities and the escalation of hysteria as the chain of events is set in motion.
2. Read Act 1 from 'How is Ruth sick?' to 'I say shut it, Mary Warren!'

Discuss how the role-play exercise above informed understanding of the power struggles in this section.

Explore this extract focusing on how to convey power and fear. Consider the use of space and levels, eye contact, silence and pause.

Look closely at Abigail's speech beginning 'Now look you. All of you .We danced' How can Abigail use movement and vocal tone to convey her power? How can the silent girls communicate their reaction?

Note: Students can have a choice of scenes for this activity. Other characters are fearful or have power; for example, Proctor intimidates Mary Warren in Act 2, Danforth has power in the courtroom and Tituba is afraid of Parris and of Abigail.

Evaluation

- What did you learn about the use of space, movement and eye contact in communicating the meaning of this section?

Documentary response notes

- How did spoken language convey fear or power?
- Comment on the use of space, movement and eye contact.

Activity 4: Mirror voice and action

You may wish to add an exercise on mirroring voice and action prior to activities. This additional exercise does not appear in the Student Book, but can add value to students' explorations. In pairs students are labelled A and B. Gather all the As together, out of the hearing of the B group, and tell them that when they return to their partner they should copy everything he/she does exactly as if they were looking into a mirror. The only difference is that this mirror can speak, so they must copy their partner's speech, including tone. It will not be long before the Bs are becoming frustrated and asking the As to stop copying them. This activity works most effectively before students have read Act 3.

Activity 5: Exploring contrasts and climax (SB pages 137-138)

1. Explain how a playwright creates the rhythm of a play. There are moments of intensity contrasted with moments of calm or tension.
2. Discuss scenes in *The Crucible* that have great emotional power. These scenes are typically played in a tense, quiet mood, e.g. the opening of Act 2. Now find contrasting scenes that capture the hysteria, e.g. the end of Act 3.
3. Read the scene in Act 3 where Elizabeth Proctor is brought before the court to answer Danforth's questions (from 'Come here woman' to 'GIRLS: Stop it !!!')
4. Discuss the tension created by dramatic irony: the audience know that John Proctor has confessed to adultery but Elizabeth does not. Explore the measured questioning and Elizabeth's hushed answers.

Study how the playwright builds the climax when Abigail pretends that she can see a bird attacking her in the courtroom.

- 5. In groups, explore how the use of voice, pause, eye contact and gesture can create tension in the section up to: 'Elizabeth: *(faintly)* No sir', then consider how the pace changes and the climax builds. Stress the importance of pause in building tension.**

6. Consider how to mark the moment when Abigail 'sees' the bird and lets out her chilling cry. Remind students that it is important to draw attention to Abigail and to change the mood. Prompt them to experiment with strategies to mark the moment and not always to rely on freezing the action. The reactions, movements and eye contact of characters can add emphasis.
7. Note how the climax is built through the exact mirroring of Abigail's voice and action. Explore the way the girls copy Abigail's tone and movements.

Evaluation

- Discuss how the contrast between tension and hysteria was realised.
- How did voice, pause, eye contact and gesture contribute to the tension?

Activity 6: Using forum theatre to examine John Proctor's moral anguish (SB page 139)

1. Discuss or read the second part of Act 4 of *The Crucible* where Proctor has to decide whether to confess and save his life or to go to the gallows. The passion and intensity of the scene between Proctor and the pregnant Elizabeth is powerfully moving but in order to play it with conviction students need to understand Proctor's moral choice.

2. Examine these lines:

I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man.

It is evil, is it not? It is evil.

I have three children - how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends?

How may I live without my name? I've given you my soul; leave me my name!

In small groups or pairs, students discuss what these lines reveal about Proctor's moral dilemma. Feedback ideas by selecting explorative strategies, elements of drama and/or the drama medium and using these to communicate what Proctor means by these lines.

3. Set up a forum theatre exploration of Proctor's choices: to save his life and betray those who died by telling a lie or to go to the gallows and save his good name.

One student takes on the role of Proctor and another Elizabeth. Improvise the scene where Elizabeth is brought to his cell.

The remainder of the group divide into two sides, each representing one character.

At any point in the scene, they can stop the action and advise their character what to say next. Alternatively, someone can take over the role.

Evaluation

- How did the forum theatre explore Proctor's stark choices?
- Did any key lines or phrases make an impact on

Documentary response notes

- Note any dialogue that had an impact on you. How did these lines provoke your thinking?
- Comment on one or two interventions. How did the suggestions change the course of the

Activity 7: Prison cell

This is another activity set in the gaol examining Proctor's position in the Salem community. This activity does not appear in the Student Book, but can add value to students' explorations. Make a square outline of tape on the floor 9x9 to create a prison cell. Set and props, selected by the students, can be added to the space.

Eight pupils play Proctor and others sit on the square boundary. The remaining students take on a role of someone from the Salem community.

Teacher in role as the gaoler enters and exits the prison with different Proctors and announces the different visitors. Each visitor has one minute to say anything to Proctor in his final moments before execution.

Activity 8: Designing a play set in an historical period (SB pages 140-141)

1. Discuss the role of a designer in creating set and costumes for a play set in a specific period of history. Note the importance of research: finding accurate details about buildings and the materials used to construct them, furniture, fabrics and dyes used in clothing.

Remind students that Puritan America is a very well-documented period and the characters and events in *The Crucible* are real; this makes it easier to find information but critical that the design details are accurate.

Explain that a designer will be creative, not necessarily absolutely accurate. For example, most of the clothing would have been black and white but this might be too stark on stage. The costume designer could introduce natural colours for the girls' clothes, whilst keeping the emblematic white aprons, collars and hats.

Remember that the set designer must consider set changes to suggest four different locations. Creative use of key pieces can alter the appearance of the set without involving time-consuming changes.

2. Provide a range of research materials, website addresses and texts about stage design. Students can work in pairs or individually: design either the set or the costumes for *The Crucible*.
3. Students gather pictures of buildings, furniture and clothing from the period and create a collage of the images that represent the design ideas.
4. Realisation of design ideas:

Draw your ideas together to consider how set design and costume could work in practice.

(Set) Make a drawing for the set design for one act.

- Consider how to create the set in simple terms - think about how the same space could be used for the court scene and the prison.
- Consider what elements of set can be selected and how the space and levels can be used to create a sense of place.
- Indicate materials and colours and include set dressing (details that suggest location, add authenticity).

(Costume) Draw and label two contrasting costumes, indicating texture and colour. If possible, attach samples of material. Remember, less is more - think about what single elements of costume could suggest female or male roles

Unit 3: Devised Performance

Unit overview

This unit provides students with the opportunity to:

- demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of practical drama skills through their application to a live performance

- communicate to an audience.

The knowledge and understanding will be gained from the Programme of Study.

Work carried out in Units 1 and 2 can form the basis of the skills needed for this final examination performance.

Students have the opportunity to show either their skills as a performer or as a performance support student in one performance only.

It is the responsibility of the centre to choose the options and content for the performances based on the assignment brief.

Edexcel does not recommend or approve the choice of performance material for this unit.

Assessment overview

This is an externally assessed unit. All students will present their work as either performers or performance support students in a single performance to an examiner appointed by Edexcel.

Edexcel will provide an externally set assignment brief which must be addressed for the final Unit 3 performance.

The examiner will visit the performance venue chosen by the centre. The examination will take place between 1 February and 31 May at a date and time agreed by the centre and the examiner.

Unit 3

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Performers

Students must work collaboratively as members of a performance group taking the role of either a performer or performance support student.

The group size must be between three and nine performers.

Performers can offer scripted performance, devised performance or a combination of both.

The assessment will be based on the assessment criteria grids on pages 33-35. Note should be taken of the four aspects of assessment that will be applied to each student's performance. These are:

- voice and movement
- roles and characterisation
- communication
- content, style, form.

Performance times must be no less than 15 minutes for smaller groups and no longer than a maximum of 45 minutes for groups of nine.

Students can be examined in one of the following options.

- Performance devised by the students from a stimulus chosen by the centre and related to the assignment brief.
- Performance of a complete short published play.
- Performance of an extract from a full length published play.
- Performance of an adaptation of a selection of scenes from a full length published play.
- Performance based on a full length published play using some of the original text with additional devised work based on the situations and roles in the original text.
- Performance of a Theatre in Education piece to a target audience chosen by the centre.
- Performance based on the assignment brief that can include devised work plus existing play texts, poetry, song lyrics and factual material. Whichever option is chosen students will be required to:
 - work collaboratively with all other group members
 - take advice, guidance and direction from the teacher
 - prepare and rehearse for a sustained period
 - show their vocal and movement practical skills in performance
 - communicate with other performers and the audience

- demonstrate an understanding of style and form within their chosen option
- demonstrate an understanding of the content and purpose of the performance
- perform to the visiting examiner
- prepare in advance an individual written description of the role(s) performed in the context of the performance
- prepare in advance as a member of the performance group a copy of the script as performed or a detailed breakdown of the scenes seen in performance
 - justify the final design decisions.

Case study 2: devised performance

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

The performance to which this case study refers can be seen in full on DVD 3 and with selected examiner commentary on DVD 2 of the Edexcel GCSE Drama Exploration and Performance DVD Pack

The assignment brief

The assignment focused on 'loss'. Our choice of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) explored issues around the impact, loss and restrictions brought about by OCD. We wanted to focus on an issue that was specific (not general, like being overweight), relevant to teenagers in the 21st century, and something that mattered to us. It provided us with many opportunities to be creative and develop our own ideas.

Our aim

Our aim was to create a piece of drama that had an immediate and gut-felt impact on our audience. We made it our target that the audience would either leave the auditorium in shocked silence or talking about our work! We kept this in the back of our minds throughout the whole of the preparation time.

How the work developed: the early stages

After discussion, we came to the conclusion that most people probably associated OCD with a physical action (e.g. constantly washing hands or checking that the door is locked) but we thought that there must be much more to it than that. We decided that it might be interesting to explore the emotional, perhaps even spiritual, side of the illness. We also wanted to show the resonance and impact on the friends, family and relationships of OCD sufferers. Our idea was that OCD was a pebble thrown into a pool of water – there were ripples (repercussions and implications) when the pebble hit the water.

The work began to develop as an intense piece of drama and we felt that we should have some lighter moments to provide comic relief for the audience and, more importantly, to act as a contrast so that intense, intimate scenes were given extra power. The first time we did a progress report to the rest of the class to show the comic song bit, the response was that the comedy and lightness of this section made what happened before and after even more intense.

About three weeks into the work, we realised that an abstract style was developing with little in the way of conventional narrative. Initially, we hadn't intended this but we decided that it was probably a more appropriate style and so we stuck with it.

How the work developed: the later stages

As the work continued we got more and more into it and carried away. We began thinking about which bits actually needed to be included and what could be pared away. We decided we needed to be more ruthless and selective in order to maintain the impact. A good example of this is the section at the beginning of the performance which was actually developed about halfway through our preparation time. Very little of our work was developed in the order in which it was seen in the final performance since we shuffled things into a final shape after most of the scenes had been devised. This beginning section was, for a couple of weeks, cut from the work as we felt it was surplus to requirements. However, as we reached the final stages of development we decided to put this section back into the work.

We made a habit of regularly reviewing our work and trying to be objective. At least once a lesson one girl would step out of the work and watch the rest of the group so she could give feedback and make suggestions.

Final rehearsals

We often showcase our drama work for friends and parents and so it seemed a good idea to do so with this work and get some feedback. A couple of days before the exam performance each group performed their work to an invited audience of friends, parents and staff. They proved very responsive and we received some positive and very helpful feedback which enabled us to add further detail and polish. By now we were in a situation

where we were polishing up small details rather than running the whole thing again and again as we felt this might make our work seem stale and lose its edge.

Conclusions

On reflection, the hardest part to do was the end – how should we end it? Usually the most difficult thing is getting started but because we were very focused on our work and unanimous in our choice of subject matter we had no difficulty in starting or maintaining momentum. It was the end that gave us the biggest headache!