

KES DRAMA DEPARTMENT



A LEVEL DRAMA AND THEATRE INDEPENDENT STUDY SUMMER 2023

Over the summer, to prepare yourself for the first term of study, where we will explore a wide range of different styles and forms of theatre, we would like you to do a selection of the following tasks.

These tasks are designed to give you a sense of the development of Theatre over the centuries. It would be impossible to take you through every development of Theatre over the past 2500 years but this will give you a feel for its evolution and how even today we are still performing and using the theatre styles and forms of the past.

We would like you to explore **at least three** of these periods in Theatre History – feel free to do all of them and/or to dip in and out of the two you don't do. Try to challenge yourself and do those you are unfamiliar with!

Make **brief** notes as you go, we will put them in your folder when we start in September.

Any questions please do contact us: soates@kes.sheffield.sch.uk

We look forward to seeing you in September!

Ms Oates and Mrs Warde

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As you work your way through this booklet, you will be directed to watch short videos and plays. Links will be provided for the videos. The plays will often have age recommendations and warnings about explicit content on their website. All are suitable for over 16s but you may want to consider, when choosing what to watch, what you are comfortable with experiencing.

If you are directed to watch a play on **Digital Theatre** or **National Theatre Live** – the log in details are always the same. These are our school's log ins so please do not share them with people outside our school.

LOG IN DETAILS FOR NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE:

<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/browse-content?docid=video>

Username: 1In*5Xi+

Password: 7Ec+5Op\$

LOG IN DETAILS FOR DIGITAL THEATRE:

Use Digital Theatre (Individual Account), and NOT Digital Theatre + (Educational Institution)

<https://www.digitaltheatre.com/consumer>

Username: louisaaliu@hotmail.com

Password: SchoolUse2021

GREEK THEATRE

Theatre started in Greece, with the first plays being performed sometime in the 6th Century BC.

The word Drama comes from the Greek word drama meaning 'action.'

Watch the following short videos and then either the play Antigone or Medea... Make notes as you watch the videos and feel free to pursue your research beyond what we have offered here.

1. An Introduction to Greek Theatre:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSRLK7SogvE>

2. An Introduction to Greek Comedy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-BvMbfkxccc>

3. An introduction to Greek Tragedy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSr6mP-zxUc>

4. Modern Interpretation of Chorus in Greek Theatre:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlXi8LfKv-0>

5. Watch **ANTIGONE** on National Theatre Live

This is a modern translation and imagining of the ancient Greek play by Sophocles.

(Jodie Whittaker as Antigone and Christopher Eccleston as Creon).

(If you want to know more about the performance of Antigone, there are a series of videos on either youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjrcNUOS2bc&list=PLJqBmjHpqgs7TVOYAmrHu1JaAcf6sA_rd or the National Theatre Live website that the link above takes you to.)

OR / AND

Watch **MEDEA** on National Theatre Live

A modern interpretation of this play by Euripides starring the wonderful Helen McCrory as Medea.

(There is a good interview with Helen McCrory here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LWZhXZpELU>)

COMMEDIA dell'ARTE

This is a form of theatre that evolved in Italy in the 16th Century. Relying on a series of 'stock' characters and being predominantly comedic, it has endured and evolved over the centuries to form the basis of much comic acting and styles of theatre.

Make notes as you watch the videos and feel free to pursue your research beyond what we have offered here.

1. Historical Overview of Commedia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqlfTG40RUU>

2. The world of Commedia - Explanation of the Stock Characters

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_OTAXWt8hY

3. The Essence of the Character – creating character from the physicality..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJEuurzDe4>

4. Physicalising Emotions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIIFR6c7NZc>

5. Language: Gromalot - Emotional babble speak..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gTs9xWJcgg>

6. Watch: **ONE MAN TWO GUVERNORS** on National Theatre Live

This is a modern re-working of the Commedia dell'Arte play by Goldoni – The Servant of Two Masters. It stars James Cordon. It is a comedy!

Try to work out who the stock characters are and how they have used the Commedia style of theatre to realise this play.

EXTENSION: (OPTIONAL)

7. **Gecko Theatre – Physical theatre – inspired and adapted from Commedia techniques (and other practitioners)**

Gecko use movement and sound – some of which sounds like words and some of which sounds like nonsense, some of which is in a different language – they therefore rely on the movement to tell the story as much as if not more than the words. Watch the video below...

Top tips for making Theatre

<https://www.geckotheatre.com/resources>

Watch one of their shows

<https://www.geckotheatre.com/resources>

REALISM AND NATURALISM

This is the form of theatre that we are probably most familiar with – soap operas, film, TV dramas all use an acting style that is like real life and therefore 'naturalistic' or realistic'. In theatre, this style of acting was developed by STANISLAVSKI – some of you may have heard of him.

Make notes as you watch the videos and feel free to pursue your research beyond what we have offered here.

1. What can you find out about Stanislavski?

Write a brief biography of him – no more than 150 words!

2. Find definitions for the following:

Given Circumstances

Emotion Memory

The magic if

Units and Objectives

Physical Action

The 7 pillars of Stanislavski's Method

3. Watch **The Cherry Orchard – Chekov** - On National Theatre Live – log in as above

Stanislavski worked with Chekov, directing his plays and together, along with Ibsen they are credited with founding Modern Drama – some may not agree with this but it is a commonly held maxim...

Also have a look at this document (Rehearsal Insights) for an insight as to how the actors used Stanislavski's techniques in rehearsal for the production of the Cherry Orchard that you have just watched:

https://media.bloomsbury.com/rep/files/ntgds_es_cherry-orchard-rehearsal-insights-03012020.pdf

EXTENSION (Optional)

Other plays whose performance style is influenced by Stanislavski's methods that you might like to watch.

A Doll's House – Ibsen - Digital Theatre – log in as above

Ghosts – Ibsen - Digital Theatre – log in as above

A Streetcar named Desire by Tennessee Williams – National Theatre Live – log in as above

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams – National Theatre Live – log in as above

BRECHT / EPIC THEATRE

Brecht is one of the Practitioners who you will also have heard of and who we will study as part of your exploration of one of our key texts. His techniques are ones which you will know already (even if you don't know they are his!) and will find invaluable in creating your own work.

As you watch the following short videos, look for what techniques and ways of performing are being used. Do you recognise any of these techniques?

Make notes and feel free to pursue your research beyond what we have offered here.

1. An Introduction to Brechtian Theatre
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-828KqtTkA>
2. Why is Brecht still relevant today? Excellent short documentary about Brecht.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-A8mCjRu5g>
3. Except from Caucasian Chalk Circle - The Final Scene
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6Q!gwXiRZk>
4. Documentary on the making Mother Courage at the National Theatre starring the incredible Fiona Shaw as Mother Courage
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6obtAUju8>
5. Watch a Performance of a modern play which draws on Brechtian Theatre Techniques – what can you spot? Choose one or more of the following:

Jane Eyre – National Theatre Live – log in as above

It's true, It's True, It's True – Breach Theatre – Digital Theatre – log in as above (Our A level students have used this for their Live Theatre Review and found it very empowering, they were particularly impressed with the performances and the way the company used comedy to provoke thought and to entertain. Please see the trigger warnings for this on the website.)

MODERN THEATRE

Theatre in the 20th and 21st Century

This is a broad category and encompasses a wide range of styles and forms, many of which we will explore during your course. We cannot possibly hope to cover it all here! So... we would like you to do your own research, feel free to bring to this any plays and work from different theatre companies that you have enjoyed and seen for yourself....

Read this Article: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2006/aug/03/theatre.politicaltheatre>

This article takes you through 50 years of theatre. Michael Billington, the theatre critic of the Guardian, goes through each decade outlining the main political events of that time and how theatre reflected them. Playwrights then write a paragraph explaining their connection to the time and how the play they are writing now will reflect that time.

Watching and Researching Plays:

The Crucible has a scheme where anyone aged 16-24 can get a ticket for themselves and a friend/family member for £5. If you aren't already signed up to it then do so – it is an excellent way to see all the Live Theatre n offer at the Sheffield Theatres for a fraction of the ticket price. (Link Below)

[Live for 5 | Sheffield Theatres](#)

They also have the IGNITE scheme where tickets are FREE and your friend gets to come for £5. These are available to people studying Drama at school so you might have one already. If not, when you join us for A Level, we can give you a letter to confirm you are with us and you can get an IGNITE card. (Link below)

[Ignite | Sheffield Theatres](#)

Watching theatre is the best way to learn about and understand the different styles and forms and to get inspiration for your own work – take this time to immerse yourself in theatre – it is good fun and entertaining!

Use the links to National Theatre Live and Digital Theatre and any other live or streamed theatre you find or see. Explore the range of contemporary Theatre on offer and try to watch at least two plays that were written in the 20th or 21st Century.

Do some research around two of the plays you like the most and find out about:

1. The company that performed them – their history and the kinds of plays they have performed in the past.
2. The Play – why was it written – what does it say about the time in which it was written? What were the reviews like (you can usually find reviews on the websites of the major papers such as the Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph and The Times. The Stage also has a good back catalogue of reviews.)
3. Can you find any documentaries, videos, interviews with or about the play, the playwright and/or the performers?

We look forward to talking to you about what you have found out and to it informing and inspiring the theatre and drama you will create with us