



Dennis Potter's

BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS

Education Pack

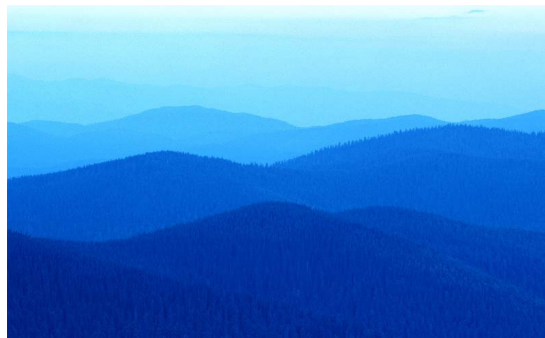
© FOURBLOKES THEATRE COMPANY
2007



Welcome to the education pack for **BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS**

Contents

- Introduction 3
- Preparing students to see the play 4
- Play synopsis 4
- The Playwright 5 - 7
- “Blue Remembered Hills”: Why this play? 8
- Why the title: “Blue Remembered Hills”? 9
- Key Stage 3/4 Citizenship Curriculum 10 - 17
- Drama Work 18 - 23
- Reflecting & Reviewing 24
- Creative Team Thoughts 25 - 26
- Cast and Company 27
- Appendix 1: Bullying 28
- Appendix 2: Growing up in WW2 *[Flexible subject trigger]* 31 - 32
- Teacher Evaluation Form 33





Blue Remembered Hills –

Potter's humour, joy, excitement and pure horror of... childhood

Introduction for Teachers:

The resource materials in this pack are intended to enhance your students' enjoyment and understanding of **Blue Remembered Hills**. The activities present creative, practical strategies for learning in a classroom or studio setting. The resources are primarily aimed at pupils aged 14+ who are studying Drama at GCSE or A Level. The activities can be easily adapted to suit both older and younger students, as well as other subject areas, particularly English and/or KS3/4 Citizenship.

There is also a section examining the process of creating the play and some of the techniques **Fourblokes** use when making theatre.

This section is primarily aimed at GCSE drama students where a compulsory theatre visit element is included in the syllabus.

We at **Fourblokes** believe that the ideas and triggers contained in this pack should help teachers and students to explore reactions to the drama and different ways of approaching some of the issues it explores.



This resource pack has been compiled by Barry Taylor, FOURBLOKES Artistic Director with invaluable help from Jamie Elliott, leading Citizenship Co-ordinator, as featured on Teachers TV.

Why not look at our website at: <http://www.fourblokes.com>



Preparing students to see the play

Blue Remembered Hills is Dennis Potter's own stage adaptation of his television drama first broadcast in the BBC's Play For Today series in 1979.

Blue Remembered Hills is, in appearance, a play about and featuring children; in message, it is a comment on the violence and shamelessness with which adults treat each other. More, it has a message about nostalgia – an issue that relentlessly obsessed both the writer and his work – and particularly about how each of us views childhood and what life was like between the pram and puberty, from primary school to adulthood. We adults forget just how supple children are, how uninhibited about and with their bodies, how much more physically and mentally agile and versatile they are compared to adults.

This production aims to bring a high quality piece of live theatre to your students, tell a gripping story and stimulate debate about some of the themes of the play. As such we feel it would be useful for students to have some preparation before seeing the show. This could simply be a case of getting them to think about what they are going to see.

- ◆ **What do they expect the play to be about?**
- ◆ **Why is this an important story to tell to young people?**

The synopsis below may be helpful in this, but we would request that no one is told the whole story beforehand.

Play Synopsis

One of Potter's best known and best loved plays, **Blue Remembered Hills** follows the adventures of a group of 7 year olds one summer's day in war-time Britain - 1943. They fight, they play, they argue, bully, romp, joke, and cry - but these 7 year olds are all played by adults.

Potter intended that by using this device an audience could see innocence shot through with experience, the naivety of childhood juxtaposed with awareness of adulthood. Throughout **Blue Remembered Hills** the audience is drawn into the totally convincing world of childhood but see with horror, through adult eyes that the cruelties, alliances, manipulations and tragedies endured at 7 are no different from those experienced at 27, 47 or 67.

The play is set in the Forest of Dean (Potter's childhood home). Both set and staging create the perfect claustrophobic atmosphere for the 5 boys and 2 girls to meet and play in the constant shadow of war-time activities (aeroplanes, gunfire, sirens) and to indulge their own war against the fearful and tearful Donald whose tragic vulnerability leads to a chilling and thought-provoking climax to the play.



The Playwright

Dennis Potter



Dennis Christopher George Potter (1935 – 1994) was a controversial English dramatist who is best known for **The Singing Detective** and other widely acclaimed television dramas which mixed fantasy and reality, the personal and the social. He was particularly fond of using themes and images from popular culture.

Potter was born in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. His father was a coal miner in this rural mining area between Gloucester and Wales. At the age of 10, Potter was sexually abused by his Uncle Ernie, who was an homosexual. The incident occurred at some point between VE Day and VJ Day, whilst he was staying with his mother's parents in London. At that time homosexuality was a criminal offence in the UK.

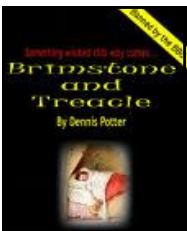
In 1946 Potter passed the eleven-plus and attended Bell's Grammar School at Coleford. Between 1953 and 1955 he did his National Service and learnt Russian at the Joint Services School for Linguists. After this, he went to New College, Oxford to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics, graduating in 1958, after obtaining a second class degree. He then started work for the BBC, later writing sketches for **That Was The Week That Was**. He also worked as a journalist and considered becoming a Labour MP – unsuccessfully standing for Hertfordshire East in the 1964 general election, and claiming that by the end of the campaign he was so disillusioned with party politics that he did not even vote for himself – before embarking on his career as a television playwright.

His television plays



Potter's career as a television playwright began conventionally enough with works like **Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton** (*The Wednesday Play*, 1965), a BBC play about a parliamentary candidate, based on Potter's own experiences as such. He took a major step into controversy with **Son of Man** (*The Wednesday Play*, 1969), starring Irish actor Colin Blakely - an alternative view of the last days of Jesus, which led to his being accused of blasphemy.

His 1971 serial **Casanova** was criticized for its sexual content.



Another play, **Brimstone and Treacle** (*Play for Today*, 1976), was withheld by the BBC for many years due to concerns over the depiction of the rape of a disabled woman. It was eventually broadcast on BBC2 in 1987, although a 1982 film version had been made, with Sting in the leading role.

Potter's groundbreaking **Blue Remembered Hills** was first shown on the BBC on 30 January 1979. The adult actors playing the roles of children were Helen Mirren, Janine Duvitski, Michael Elphick, Colin Jeavons, Colin Welland, John Bird, and Robin Ellis. The moralistic theme was the child is father of the man.

Potter had used the dramatic device of adult actors playing children before. However, the powerful imagery of "Blue Remembered Hills" lives on, not least because of its uneasy, claustrophobic feeling provoking elements of xenophobia and a consideration of fearing the outsider, such was the prevalence of the post-war mood within British society.



Potter continued to make news as well as winning critical acclaim for drama serials such as **Pennies From Heaven** (1978) – which brought Bob Hoskins into the limelight – and **The Singing Detective** (1986), which did the same for Michael Gambon. Both series were adapted as feature films with Potter receiving an Oscar nomination for **Pennies from Heaven**.



“THE SINGING DETECTIVE” [1986]

Potter's screenplay for **Gorky Park** (1983) earned him an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America. He wrote the script for the widely praised but seldom seen 1985 miniseries of F. Scott Fitzgerald's **Tender Is the Night** with Mary Steenburgen as Nicole Diver. He also wrote the screenplay for **Dreamchild** (1985).

Potter's TV miniseries, **Blackeyes** (1989, also a novel), a drama about a fashion model was reviewed as self-indulgent by some critics. In 1992 he directed a film, **Secret Friends** (from his novel, *Ticket to Ride*), starring Alan Bates.



Potter's romantic comedy **Lipstick on Your Collar** (1993) was a return to more conventional themes.

By and large, reviewers took to "Lipstick." Victor Lewis-Smith, in the *Evening Standard*, gave the play high marks, and concluded: "Whatever Channel 4 paid him they've got their money's worth already." There was general agreement among the critics that "Lipstick" was on its way to success and many found it to be Potter's jolliest and most accessible work for years.

Although Potter won few awards, he is held in high regard by many within the television and film industry, and he was an obvious influence on such creators as Steven Bochco, Alan Ball, Margaret Edson and Alain Resnais.

His work has been the subject of many critical essays, books, websites and documentaries.

In 1990 Mary Whitehouse, a long time critic of Dennis Potter, claimed, on BBC Radio, that Potter had been influenced by witnessing his mother engaged in adulterous sex. Potter's mother won substantial damages from the BBC and *The Listener*, who were reportedly unimpressed by Whitehouse's claim to have had a blackout on air and subsequently to have had no recollection of her words.



Potter's psoriasis

During the early 1960s, Potter began to suffer from an acute form of psoriasis known as psoriatic arthropathy, a rare hereditary condition that affected his skin and caused arthritis in his joints. There is some indication that this disease is the one the Bible refers to as "leprosy" (which is not Hansen's disease). For the rest of his life, Potter was frequently in hospitals, sometimes completely unable to move and in great pain. The disease eventually ruined his hands, reducing them to what he called "clubs". He had to learn to write by strapping a pen to his hand.

On Valentine's Day 1994, Potter learned that he had terminal cancer of the pancreas and liver. It was thought that this was a side effect of the medication he was taking to control his psoriasis, also considerably aggravated by his chain-smoking habit. With typical sardonic humour, he named his cancer Rupert, after Rupert Murdoch, who represented so much of what he hated about British society.

He continued to care for his wife, Margaret, who was suffering from the breast cancer that claimed her life on 29 May 1994. At age 59, he died a week later.

Last interview

Not long before his death, on 15 March 1994 Potter gave a strikingly memorable interview to Channel 4 (he had broken most of his ties with the BBC as a result of his disenchantment with Directors-General Michael Checkland and especially John Birt, whom he had famously referred to as a "croak-voiced Dalek"), in which he described his work and his determination to continue writing until the end. As he sipped on a morphine cocktail, he told a visibly moved Melvyn Bragg that he had two works he intended to finish (**Cold Lazarus** and **Karaoke**) before his impending death: "My only regret is if I die four pages too soon". The interview was shown on 5 April 1994.

Criticism

Potter was sometimes attacked by other television writers, most notably Alan Bennett and Matthew Graham, for a perceived lack of humility and self-criticism; Graham described him as having "come undone" after **The Singing Detective** and beginning to believe "every line that dripped from his pen was a work of genius". Bennett referred in his 1998 diaries to a television program "that took Potter at his own self-evaluation (always high), when there was a good deal of indifferent stuff which was skated over". **Private Eye** once lampooned him as Dennis Plodder, due to the slow pace of some of his work, also attacking him as "the whinging playwright".





Blue Remembered Hills – Why this play?

Summer, 1943. WWII Fighter planes battle to control the skies of England. Meanwhile, in the countryside below, a group of children laugh, cry, tease and bully the afternoon away. It's much like any afternoon in fact. But on this particular day, their make-believe world is about to change forever.

Barry Taylor, Fourblokes' Artistic Director, talks about the production.

What drew you to do Blue Remembered Hills?

Finding a vehicle for 'the tricky third album' for **Fourblokes** wasn't easy but I'd workshopped **Blue Remembered Hills** with Y10/11 Drama students a few years previously and they, and I, really enjoyed it; it's loads of fun, but not pink and fluffy, it's got a great dark side to it, and was accordingly a natural candidate for a **Fourblokes'** production."

Is it relevant to modern audiences?

"One of the main themes is childhood, the way children treat each other, the power of children's play and so on. That's as relevant today as it ever was."

What particular problems arise from adult actors having to portray children?

"One of the elements underpinning the way children are is a complete lack of self-awareness: at the age of seven, kids don't worry about what they look like or how they come across, they just say what comes into their heads. They can be manipulative and have two sides, but they're single-minded. Getting that across - in role - is challenging, as we adults tend to play all kinds of games of compromise and social nicety in order to accommodate others – kids have few such inhibitions.

We aim to present theatre which is both challenging and entertaining. We concentrate on modern classics and syllabus texts like *Blue Remembered Hills*, and although we're not professional actors we are committed to producing material of a professional standard."

Why should people – of all ages - come and see Blue Remembered Hills?

"Denis Potter tackles subjects which are close to the bone, but although *Blue Remembered Hills* has some superbly moving moments, it is very funny. It's extremely well written and Potter's dialogue is superb. It's fun, it's lively, and for older members of the audience there's a nostalgia element too."





Why the title: “Blue Remembered Hills”?

Blue Remembered Hills, is an evocation of Potter’s own wartime childhood in Gloucestershire. The title is taken from a poem in A E Housman’s collection:

A Shropshire Lad

**Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?**

**This is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain.
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.**

For Potter, growing up among his contemporaries had meant suffering abuse, humiliation and deceitful girls, a life he re-visited often in his plays, notably in Blue Remembered Hills.

The “land of lost content” for him was a distinctly unhappy experience and thus the play is no rosy-spectacled view of childhood.

Set in the countryside during the Second World War this deceptively simple tale combines comedy and tragedy in a gripping tale of seven youngsters as they play, tease, argue and chase...

It’s still a world of considerable innocence, but Potter packs a powerful punch. That sunny summer day of years gone by reaches a tragic and spectacular climax as innocence comes tumbling down.

Though based in wartime Britain the story also seemed to be sharply relevant to contemporary times, through the continued and intensifying threats to childhood that confront today’s youngsters.





Key Stage 3/4 Citizenship Curriculum

Blue Remembered Hills is a play that explores the dark side of human nature. During the course of the story we see how fragile human relationships can be in the face of cruelty and alienation. It asks questions about the roots and consequences of aggression and persecution.

Many of these questions are relevant to work in the key stage 3/4 citizenship curriculum.

The play can be used as a powerful stimulus to provoke debate and discussion around some of these complex issues.

Teaching about prejudice and intolerance

Many of the underlying issues raised in the play have, moral, ethical and even political dimensions that may be complicated or difficult. There are no simple answers. The citizenship curriculum recommends an inquiry-based model of teaching that builds on students' prior knowledge and is lead primarily by their interests and concerns. This can be framed simply by three basic questions:

- ◆ **What do students already know?**
- ◆ **What do they think they know?**
- ◆ **What questions do they want to pursue?**

Exploring ethical dilemmas

Many of the issues explored in the play are highly relevant to current world events. Opening up a debate on some of these issues may reveal a wide range of opinions. Engaging students in dialogue about what ethical standards are appropriate for judging their own actions and the actions of others can be an important learning experience.

The goal in exploring these issues should be to help students engage in critical thinking and to make their own reasoned decisions about controversial issues. There are some ideas and triggers below that could be used as starting points for debate.

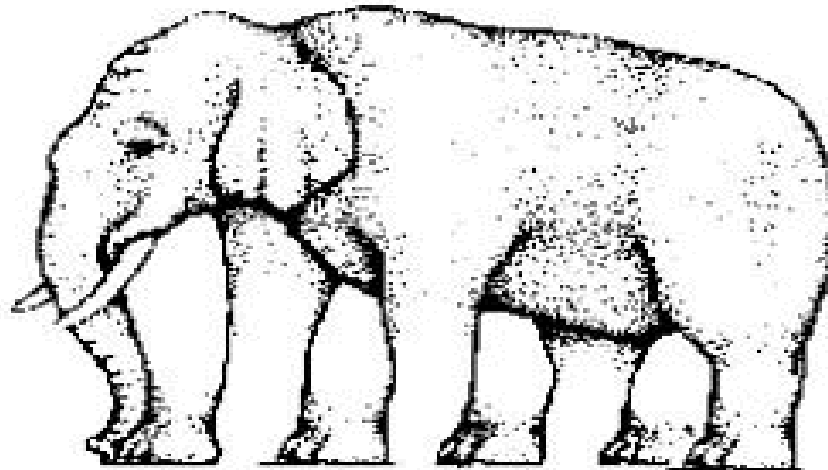
There is no deliberate, prescriptive approach to developing these stimuli; be prepared to tailor the ideas according to the age and ability of your students.



Appearances can be deceptive



What can you see?



How many legs does this elephant have?

Look at the chart and say the COLOUR not the word

YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE
BLACK	RED	GREEN
PURPLE	YELLOW	RED
ORANGE	GREEN	BLACK
BLUE	RED	PURPLE
GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE

Left - Right Conflict

Your right brain tries to say the colour but your left brain insists on reading the word.



A motor bike rider was stopped by the police for speeding. The police officer noted his age, and said...

at 65 you should know better

Two lorry drivers were sitting in a transport café chatting about their difficult journey. On the way back to their lorries, one of the lorry drivers...

called her husband on her mobile phone

The athlete who won the marathon was very fit. She also had the very latest...

lightweight wheelchair

The football team was ecstatic to win. They rushed back to the changing rooms to get ready for their night out...

at a hen party.



What happens when we fail to look beneath the surface?

- We miss out on great opportunities to see the qualities that people have to offer
- We miss out on the experiences and skills of others
- We miss out on potential friends and people to offer us support
- We miss out on the bigger picture
- We begin to create stereotypes





Key Stage 3/4 Citizenship Curriculum

What is Bullying?*



“Picking on someone and tormenting them all the time”

“Bullying is making you do something you don’t want to do by threatening you”

“A bully is a person who deliberately sets out to hurt someone else”

“There are different types of bullying like physical, verbal and emotional bullying”

**BEAT BULLYING TOGETHER !
STAND UP, SPEAK OUT !**

***Check Appendix 1 for further lesson support**



'Jumble'

Barbara Heston is the most important person in our class. She is a large girl with a loud voice. Her friends say she is pretty. But I think its best to keep out of her way.

The new girl in the class was small. Her name was Lily though she looked more like a weed, being thin and nervous. She was wearing the wrong clothes.

Our school doesn't have a school uniform. We wear what we choose. However, we mainly want to copy what Barbara is wearing. She always wears the latest and most expensive fashions. Lily came to school wearing shabby grey trousers with a patch on one of the knees and a red and green jumper that was too small for her.

One of Barbara's friends said something to her and they both laughed. They began calling the girl "Jumble" because she looked like she got her clothes from a jumble sale. We all began to call the new girl jumble. She didn't ask us not too but I know that she did not like it. I could see that she had tears in her eyes.

One day she did cry. Barbara had lost a pound coin in the classroom and she blamed "Jumble" straight away. Jumble was sitting alone on the next table. "It wasn't me", she said but everyone thought she was guilty.

"Give it back to me", Barbara said holding out her hand. "Give it back or you will be sorry".

"I haven't got it". Jumble cried and her tears spilled over her cheeks

"Lets search her", someone called out.

We all moved towards her but she fled out of the room and into the corridor.

We all went to the playground but Jumble wasn't there. She must have found somewhere to go.

Just before we went back into the school after break Barbara pulled her hanky out of her pocket. Something fell on the ground and spun for a moment. It was her pound coin. Barbara picked it up, made a face and said, "Oh well, I bet she does pinch things. Did you see how guilty she looked?".

"Are you going to tell her", a friend asked.

I watched Barbara that afternoon. She never went near Jumble. She didn't pass her a note, say anything or go anywhere near her.

When the final bell went Jumble left quickly as she always did, scared and afraid.



Now what?

- ◆ **Having seen the play, how do students feel about the children's actions?**
- ◆ **Is there any justification for what they have done?**
- ◆ **How else could they have responded to the situation?**
- ◆ **Does violence inevitably lead to retribution and further violence?**
- ◆ **How can we intervene and bring an end to a cycle of violence in contemporary Britain?**

Many of these questions can also be illuminated by talking about what happens on the micro level in interpersonal conflicts.

- ◆ **Is there a connection between a fight in any school playground and the events in the play?**

You could:

- ◆ **Talk about the children's relationships as portrayed in the play - how do these relate to real life situations?**
- ◆ **Which events in the play do students think are unacceptable in a civilized society?**
- ◆ **Are there things that are acceptable in times of stress - war, for example - that would be unacceptable in peacetime?**

Use newspaper reports of real-life conflict situations to compile a list of things that have happened to people which students believe should never be allowed to happen to anyone.





Drama Work

Blue Remembered Hills offers many opportunities for follow up drama work using the events, characters and issues explored in the play as well as some of the techniques used by **Fourblokes** in staging it. The following are some brief ideas for starting points:

1: Tableaux work

A good place to begin exploring the subtext of the story is with the title itself.

In small groups students could make tableaux to illustrate their understanding of the poem.

This is a powerful visual way of demonstrating the sense of lost innocence at the heart of the story and reveals a lot about the motives behind Potter's ideas.

2: Filling in the gaps

There is a lot of scope in "Blue Remembered Hills" for **improvisation** around the story.

In the script we get hints about what life is like for the characters before the war shattered everything.

Improvising around the pre war lives of the characters could be a useful way of **deconstructing** subsequent events.

- ◆ **Are there things in Donald's home life that might explain why he is treated with so little care and respect?**
- ◆ **What kind of relationship did he have with his father, do you think?**
- ◆ **And how was he with his mother?**

These improvisations can also open up debate about how we as an audience relate to the characters' actions.

- ◆ **Is the final tragedy something that could only happen to people like Donald, or could it happen to anyone?**
- ◆ **How would characters from a different background have reacted in his situation?**

Hot seating the characters to explore their motivations could also provide valuable insights.

The extract on the following page may help to facilitate this particular type of improvisation.



Drama Work cont.

Extract for possible Hot Seating use: Donald Duck/Audrey/Angela

Donald (smirking) Hurry up. I be off up to the *bloody* pub in half a tick. To get *bloody* drunk.

Angela I shall wash thy mouth out with soap!

Audrey (*pleased*) Shall us, Angela? Shall us?

Donald Nine or ten pints of scrumpy, that's what I want. I've lost a lot of blood.

Audrey grabs his thumb.

Audrey You're not coming home stinking of drink at all hours and expect *me* to put up with it are you?

Audrey sucks his thumb

Donald (*excited*) Shut thee mouth, 'ooman. Nag, nag, nag. I'm not going to put up with it, so there.

Audrey (*spitting*) There. I've stopped the blood gushing out. You'll die in a minute, though. *Really* die, I mean.

Donald Brave, aren't ? I bent half bloody brave, mind!

A sudden shift from Angela

Angela Quack! Quack! Quack!

Donald Shut up!

Audrey Smack her one, Donald.

Angela Yes, and if he hits me I shall tell his mam. Her'll skin him alive, won't her, Donald Duck? Won't her? She hits you with the poker, don't she!

Donald Leave me alone. Leave me alone.

Angela Quack! Quack! Quack!

Donald (*screaming*) Shut up! Shut up!

Audrey looks at Angela. Their eyes seem to flare. They join forces.



Drama Work cont.

3: Status

This production of **Blue Remembered Hills** has a composite set. The actors are required to use the different locations physically and these often represent the shifting power balance within their relationships - principally through movement.

The first scene in the play where Willie and Peter battle for control of the space is a good example and could well trigger a status exercise involving a table and chair :

- ◆ **Two actors enter the performing space. The object of the exercise is for the actors to play at claiming the highest status.**
- ◆ **For example, actor one could sit on the table.**
- ◆ **Once the status has been claimed, actor 2 has to claim the high status; for example they could sit on the chair and put their feet on the table.**
- ◆ **Actor 1 does not resist this; they are playing a game and once the high status has been claimed by either actor, they are immediately ready to relinquish it.**
- ◆ **Now actor 1 tries to get the high status back. They could jump on the table and tower over actor 1.**

And so the game goes on...

This can be a very creative exercise in getting students to think about showing relationship dynamics physically.

4: Consequences

Improvisations exploring the emotional impact of the incident on different characters could help to illustrate how far reaching the consequences are.

- ◆ **For example you could explore the moment where Donald's mother is told of his death, or the local people discussing what has happened at the barn.**
- ◆ **Or, improvise a scene between John and Willie as they reflect on events next day.**

5: Devising from themes

The production of **Blue Remembered Hills** can be a springboard for students to devise their own work. This could take the form of them devising their own versions of the story or taking key themes and exploring their own responses to them. Students could also take specific incidents from the play — **such as the squirrel hunt or hiding from the 'escaped prisoner'**.

This approach can be really effective in helping them to explore the underlying emotional journey that each of the characters goes on.



6: Music

The music which accompanies the action throughout the production is of key importance to the emotional and dramatic impact of the show.

Music provides a commentary on the events in the play. The power of music to produce an immediate and direct emotional hook for the audience is an important feature of any **Fourblokes** show.

Students can explore this through devising short pieces of physical, largely non-verbal theatre and then replaying them with music.

- ◆ **What effect does it have on the impact of the scene if an emotionally appropriate piece of music is used to accompany it?**
- ◆ **What happens if the mood of the music doesn't fit the mood of the scene, or is even directly in opposition to it?**

It would be difficult to survive in an environment where there was no sound, yet sound affects people in different ways.

- ◆ **What do you think would be the effect on your work and that of your fellow students if music were played during the school day? (Perhaps your school already does!)**
- ◆ **What subjects would best benefit from background examples?**
- ◆ **If you support the idea of music in lessons, give specific examples of pieces you would want played, and why.**

Music is a way of linking parts of a story together. Decisions of when to introduce it, make it louder, change tempo, stop it etc. are critical for dramatic emphasis.

- ◆ **Create your own short storyline and the music to accompany it, using a simple storyboard approach.**
- ◆ **Share and discuss with classmates.**





7: Writing

Read this short extract then try at least ONE of the tasks that follow it:

The Hollow

The five plunge for safety into a natural, grassy, scooped-out hollow in the midst of the trees. They huddle together, breathless and scared.

John Him won't find us down in here.

Angela You sure?

John Ne-ver. 'Course him won't.

Willie We didn't stand a chance out there on the path.

John (*unsure*) This is nice and safe. Ennit?

Audrey What did you hear, Raymond?

Raymond Him!

John Did – did you see him?

Raymond I d-du-don't know.

Angela I want to go home.

John We'll have to stay here a bit.

Willie F'r how long, though?

Raymond (*whispering*) Till d-dark – shall us?

John They'll have the guards out after him. They'll soon catch him.

Audrey What'll they do to him?

John Shoot him.

Audrey Good job.

Willie Where's the pram?

Angela Oh. Oh. The pram! And Dinah! (*A cry*) Poor little Dinah ...

John It won't hurt where it is.

Angela (*wailing*) But her'll be frightened!

Willie Hold your hosses!

But she is sobbing



John Oh we'll go and get the pram. In a minute.

Willie Who will?

John (*licking his lips*) All of us. It'll be all right if'n we stick together. Eh?

Audrey (*belligerently*) Never mind the pram!

Willie How long we going to stay here, that's what I wanna know.

Raymond (*whispering*) Must be d-du-dinner time



Task1 - Directing:

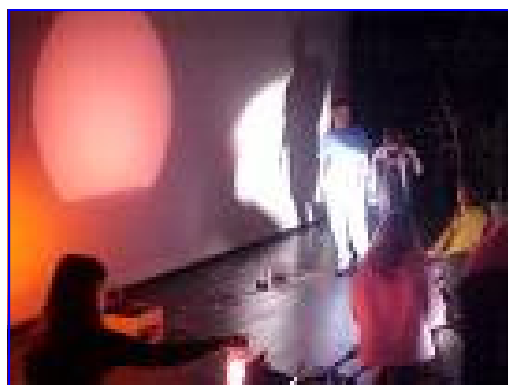
- ◆ Give a written outline in approximately 500 words as to how you would direct this extract - either in a small drama studio or on a school stage, YOU decide!

Task 2 - Designing:

- ◆ Design a simple but effective set for this extract, using whatever resources you would have easy access to in your school! [Written notes should enhance and inform your artwork!]

Task 3 - Sound Design:

- ◆ Using an appropriate keyboard, soundlab or some simple pc music software [be resourceful!] create a music or sound effect 'backdrop' for this scene. [Be prepared to explain your choices and ideas!]





Reflecting and Reviewing

Reviewing live performance is an important element of Drama and Theatre Studies.

The purpose of this section is to provide approaches intended to help you reflect on your visit to the theatre.

There is no set format to organising your thoughts and opinions and the following prompts are only a guide to structuring your notes.

Writing a review

Whilst watching **Blue Remembered Hills** you will be forming opinions and making judgments about the play and the production. The critic's job is to pass comment on the quality of the show informing others about its good and bad points in the process.

When writing a review of a play, there is a lot to think about. The efforts of the actors, director, composer, set designer and lighting designer are all presented for your judgment.

You may not want to comment on every aspect of the play, but the following outline will help you to structure your review.

1: Introduction

Title: **Blue Remembered Hills**

Director: Barry Taylor

Company: Fourblokes Theatre

Where and when you saw the play.

How you felt about seeing the play before it started.

2: The play

- ◆ Give a brief outline of the story and the main characters.
- ◆ Did you find the story convincing?
- ◆ Which parts worked best for you?
- ◆ Were there any moments that stirred your emotions?
- ◆ Did it hold the audience's interest? How did they react to the play?
- ◆ What were the main themes of the play?
- ◆ How did you feel about the characters?
- ◆ Which one did you respond to most and why?
- ◆ Did you reflect on your life, or the lives of people you know, or society as a whole?
- ◆ How does the play compare or relate to others that you have seen?



3: Style

- Read the interviews with the creative team (see below)
- In what ways did the actors use theatrical conventions?
- What effect did these have?
- How do they compare to other productions you have seen?
- Why do you think the director has chosen to work in this style?
- Can you identify the influence of any theatre practitioners you have studied?

Creative team thoughts

All of the Fourblokes team, including the director, designer, lighting designer and actors were involved in the whole creative process.

Below are some of their personal views about the **Blue Remembered Hills** project.

Barry Taylor, Director

“Once we’d chosen BRH I wanted to create a style of production that felt coherent and suitably ‘Fourblokes-edgy’. I work very closely with Kim (Designer) to visually create our take on the coherent style - supported by a carefully selected soundscape. Then the key decisions are about casting. Good actors have great instincts; they just need gentle guidance and a sense of all heading in the same direction. Given that, you’re away.”

Kim Harris, Designer

“My approach to design was very much about creating a stylistic set as opposed to a naturalistic one reflecting Potter’s style of writing. Combined with ambient music and lighting I wanted to form subtle atmospheric changes rather than definitive set/scene changes. I also wanted to convey the idea of space and levels so the actors would be perceived to be moving to different areas of the woodland.”

Paul Wilson, Actor

“I originally found the idea of performing in 'BRH' quite daunting as I knew how physically challenging playing the part of a seven year old would be. However, a read through of Potter's script quickly gave me enough confidence in the level of material to work with. Littered with the insensitive, direct jibes only children can get away with, Potter's lib gives a ruthless undertone of kids at their most bullish. Whilst fun to deliver, many of the scenes have enough of this hard humoured edge to them to make anyone feel uncomfortable, both on and off stage, which is, I feel, what good drama should be all about. The scene where the boys give chase to the squirrel is a good example of this. Fun to start with, then a swift decent into something darker!”



4: The acting

How did you rate the actors? Comment on voice, gesture and movement. What things did they do to distinguish between the characters they played?

5: Conclusion

Bring in anything that you thought remarkably good or bad about the production. On balance was it a successful show? Did it keep your interest and involve you with the characters? Did it make you laugh, cry, think? Was it suitable for its audience?

Structuring Your Notes

Direction

- What do you think the director was trying to achieve?
- What theatrical devices and conventions were used?
- How successfully did the elements of the production (acting, staging, design) combine?
- Were these choices successful in serving the writing?
- Were the vocal and aural elements engaging?
- Were the visual and physical elements meaningful?
- Was there an interesting and varied use of pace and rhythm?
- Did you learn anything about modern theatre practices?

Acting

- How would you describe the acting style?
- How does it compare with work you've seen in other productions or have done yourself?
- Was the style of acting appropriate to the kind of play and style of production?
- Why or why not?
- What were the key moments from the production that stand out in your memory?
- Who gave the most notable performance and why? What did they do well?
- What skills did they use? What qualities did they convey?



Design Elements

- Describe the sets, lights and costumes. Include sketches where they are helpful.
- How did the design contribute to the production's meanings?
- Did the choice of playing area suit the production? Why or why not?
- Could the space have been used in a different way? How? Suggest ways...





Appendix 1 - BULLYING

What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated harassment over a period of time, and is done in a way that makes it difficult for the person being bullied to defend themselves.

There are three main types of bullying:

Verbal bullying, including:

- Teasing
- Sarcasm
- Name calling
- Continually ignoring someone
- Racist & sexist remarks

Physical bullying, including:

- Taking your money or personal belongings
- Pushing, hitting, kicking and punching
- Sexual abuse, including unwanted physical contact or comments

Indirect bullying, including:

- Spreading rumours or starting gossip about you
- Getting you into trouble for no real reason
- Excluding you
- Sending you hurtful messages via texts, emails, phoning and letters



Appendix 1 BULLYING cont.

Some facts about bullying

- Every seven seconds someone in Britain is being bullied.
- One in five secondary school pupils have experience of bullying.
- Bullying can happen anywhere; one in four people are bullied at work.
- Bullying can make you feel depressed, shy, isolated, insecure and even suicidal.
- Most people who bully have been bullied themselves.
- In many cases the effects of bullying aren't visible at all. But this doesn't mean they're less hurtful.
- 20,000 young people got help last year when they spoke out against bullying.





Appendix 1 BULLYING cont.

If you're being bullied right now, what do you do?

If you're being bullied verbally, physically or indirectly by someone or a group of other people, you need to know how to deal with it.

Don't panic

Don't panic, keep as calm as you can, and don't worry right now about the reasons why you think they're doing it to you. You just need it to stop as soon as possible.

Try talking to them

It might sound unlikely, but people who bully may not always be aware of how they are making you feel, so you could try telling them in a calm but firm manner.

Tell someone

If you're being bullied, you really need to tell someone - someone you feel you can trust.

Ignore it: It's a good step to try and ignore the people bullying you, and the attention they get from making you feel bad because if you deprive them of the attention, there's little point in them bullying you.

Walk away: There's no point listening to someone being abusive when you don't have to. Showing that you're not just going to stand there and take it shows that you're no easy target.

Try to stay in company: You are less likely to be bullied if there are other people around you.

Act assertive: Assertiveness is not the same as being rude or aggressive. It's about you believing - and stating - that you have the right to be heard and respected as the person you are.

Stand tall: Even if, deep down you do not feel it, standing upright so that you appear big and confident will actually make you feel bigger and more confident.

Speak clearly: Being clear, even in simply saying things like 'No', 'Don't do that', 'Leave me alone' or 'Stop'. It makes you sound more confident – and therefore you're being more of a threat to the intimidating behaviour. Practice it often, out loud, on your own; you will feel more in control. It does work.



Appendix 2 GROWING UP IN WW2

Life in the Home

All our water had to be carried from a stand-pipe across the road or from rainwater butts. The rainwater was used for washing and cleaning. As you can imagine every drop of water was precious. The soapy water was used for washing the floors after the laundry and the final rinsing water was heated for baths. Laundry was a big issue. The copper was lit on Monday mornings to heat the water. Various tin baths were filled with rinsing water; there was the mangle for wringing out the clothes and then blue water to get the whites bright. In bad weather, the drying had to be round the kitchen range.

Outside in the garden was the wash-house with a brick copper, a tin bath and a mangle. Behind was the lavatory - a wooden bench with a hole and bucket; newspaper for toilet paper; hurricane lamp for the dark nights. It was grandad's job to empty the bucket and bury the contents in the garden. Rain, hail, snow or shine, this was what we used except during the night when we had chamber pots.

The Primary School

Our school was only a few hundred yards from my grandparents' house. It was a very typical village school catering for 4½ to 14 years old with two teachers. There was one large class room divided by a partition which folded back. Little ones were in one half and the older ones in the other. There was a large round tortoise-cast iron stove in each half with a big iron guard round, which was handy for drying clothes and shoes in bad weather, as a lot of the children walked long distances and their families were too poor to buy waterproof clothing. My best friend was one of 10 children and her father was a poacher. There was a dark cloakroom (more of a corridor) where we were banished for any misdemeanours. I was often out there for not knowing my tables. The lavatories were in an outbuilding. There was a tarmac playground but no playing field. For sports we used a farmer's meadow. Milk was in third of a pint bottles and we had it free every morning at playtime. I think why my generation are generally healthy is that our childhood food was fresh and unprocessed. We were rationed so we didn't overeat, and as hygiene was basic, we certainly ate our 'peck of dirt'. On the hygiene front, we were all given cod liver oil and malt each morning at school. We were lined up for our spoonful - ONE spoon for all - no cleaning in between each child! Oh great days.

We sat in rows of two-person desks facing the teacher and the blackboard. Her desk was near the stove!. Youngest children were at the front, oldest at the back. An awful lot was learnt by rote. We had slates until we could write properly and progressed to books with pencil and then pen and ink. The vicar played an active part in school life; he took us for religious education and heard us singing.



Appendix 2 GROWING UP IN WW2 cont.

At play

As there was no afternoon school, we children were left to amuse ourselves. We had the usual games in their season - skipping, ball games, hoops, marbles, conkers. We were out off doors in most weathers. Opposite the school was an embankment with huge old chestnut trees. Lots of roots were exposed down the bank where we played 'houses' and 'shops'. The dips and holes were cooking places or cupboards. Our 'food' was conkers, acorns, seeds and 'hips & haws' (hawthorn). We ate the young leaves of the hawthorn, made pipes with elder twigs, crushed elderberries for drinks or just ate them as they came off the tree. We picked wild flowers in the Spring - primroses & violets. In the Autumn we collected rose hips for the Government to make Rose Hip Syrup (for vital Vitamin C). Harvest was another great time - watching the binders and the corn being stoked, with the men chasing the rabbits and the women gleaning for chicken feed.

War memory

Two events stand out for me in connection with the war. One was being got out of bed to watch a 'dog fight' between two planes. It must have been summer as it was still light. The other was the great excitement of a German plane which came down in a field. It was guarded but we youngsters wanted to get near it, to ask endless questions and try to cadge pieces of it.

[Adapted from Elizabeth's recollections of growing up in rural Gloucestershire during WW2.]





Teacher's Resource Pack:

EVALUATION FORM

Please would you take a few moments to complete this form.

Name:

School/College Address:

Tel No/Fax No:

Date you attended production:

Venue:

Ticket price:

Comments on the production:

Have you used this pack:

If yes, has it been useful?:

What did you particularly like/dislike about the pack?:

Any other comments:

Please return completed form to:

'FOURBLOKES', 59, Breach Road, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7NL

Or email us at info@fourblokes.com

THANKS!