

The

BIG TIME

DAVID WILLIAMSON'S

THE UNDERSTUDY
DRAMA & THEATRE RESOURCES

SCRIP
**PRE-READING
& FIRST READ**

Dear Teachers,

This is our freebie resource to introduce the first extracts of the Pre-Release Material for June 2024. We are trying a few new things this year. As I taught with our pre-release resources for the first time in the previous batch, I've identified ways I could make them more user-friendly and easier to navigate.

One thing we will be introducing is a first read before the main practical exploration. This will mean that students have read the extract at least twice and will give them time to 'digest' the plot and characters, before coming to their practical work and written work. It will mean that when they do the practical work, they can draw on their knowledge of how the characters behave in the whole extract in order to shape their ideas.

There is some guidance on the next slide for introducing the play using these slides. Then there are slides for various activities leading up to a first read and a few simple activities to help organise information. We find that students respond very well to having this kind of help with setting up their scripts and being organised – especially those who might usually be the kind to lose scripts, keep half-hearted notes. This is a great opportunity to teach skills of analysis and organisation of ideas. The fact that the extracts are only 18 pages or less means they can keep on top of it and feel successful.

The first set of slides for practical exploration is due out on or before 17 September. We expect it might be a little earlier, but don't want to make promises we can't keep.

If you would like to pre-order (especially if you need to pay via a bank transfer from school) you can do so in the shop: www.the-understudy.org/shop
Otherwise you can buy an instant download as soon as they are published.

Kind regards,
Jane

PRE-READING
& FIRST READ

You can play this song to further add to the atmosphere while they are doing the images / puzzle. [Ethel Merman - There's No Business Like Show Business](#)

INTRO LESSON - we can't decide what's more fun so offered two options:

Option 1 - images around the room

1. Print out slides 4-18.
2. Stick the images (Slides 4-9) around the room and have students enter and walk around the room.

Option 2 - puzzle

1. Print out slide 10 (all the images on one page) - enough for your class to work alone, in pairs, in groups - you decide. Cut them up into puzzles and spread them around the room. Have a competition to see who can complete the puzzle. (Cut each sheet slightly differently and mix them all up to make it harder. Or give each group all the correct pieces in one envelope to make it easier.)

Once they have done the puzzle or had a chance to look around:

2. Have students make some guesses about themes and ideas in the play. Can they guess at a plot?
3. Now have students read the quotes from the play, which will give them further insight.
4. What is revealed now?
5. Get them each to select one quote and rehearse it with vocal expression, facial expression and movement or gesture.
There are slides lower down with instructions for these exercises (slides 19-25)
6. Pairs or trios. Can each pair create a naturalistic scene using at least two of the quotations. (Slide 19)
7. Improvised scenes. We've described some scenarios from the family's past that are referred to in the play. Students can work in pairs or trios to create those scenes and then experiment with style, starting to lean into realistic comedy. (Slides 20-21)
8. Finally, students can begin preparing their scripts for use with The Understudy slides. We think it's well worth their time to sit and highlight characters, divide their scripts into units and label each unit so they start the project organised and clear.
9. From here, we will be doing a first read together with some simple activities described in the later slides.

SOUL

Written by
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REVENGE



REJECTED



You only got fifteen likes one day so you
start counting the number of
sleeping pills you have. It's sick. Social
media is sick!

Your self-respect is being slowly eroded
because you know your talent isn't being
fully utilised.

Okay, you want to play nasty? You had
one success fifteen years
ago and the fact you've done nothing
since then doesn't inspire great
confidence.

A word of advice. If you don't command
respect, never demand it.

Yes, you're sometimes depressed, but so
am I. We often fight, but not
for all that long, and the rest of the time
you make me laugh.

You're young, you're beautiful, the whole
of the country loves you, so why not ...
Marry a rich guy and have an easy life?

The one thing that's always puzzled me about you is that you're always willing to accept second best. In life, in your career.

Why do we keep playing out this little
fiction that we're friends?

A real friend doesn't call someone's life
choices into question as often
as you do.

IMPROVISED SCENES

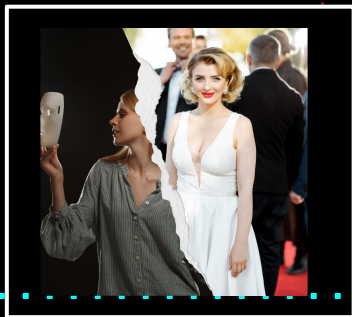
In pairs or trios, create a scene using at least two of the quotations provided.

You can use more. Try to make your scene quite realistic but you don't need to resist comedy if it's leaning that way.

(It must feel real though.)

IMPROVISED SCENES

In pairs, improvise and rehearse one of these scenes:



2

- Two young actresses at Drama school have just been given their roles for the final performance for agents. One is a lead, the other is the maid (small part).
- "Leads" objective: to console her friend and try to make the best of it; to play down her role.
- The other's objective: to let her friend know she thinks she's better her without coming out and saying it.



2

- A woman is reaching her late thirties and wants to have a baby. Her male partner is slightly older but not sure. He thinks it will ruin her career. She is an actress and the main breadwinner.
- Her objective: to get him to commit to a baby or break up
- His objective: to get her to forget about having a baby and focus on her career and stay with him.



2

- An actor meets his/her agent, believing s/he has been given the role of a lifetime. The agent reveals s/he's been passed over for someone else.
- Agent's objective: to convince the actor this is not the end of their career
- Actor's objective: to understand why they were rejected and/or to try to reverse the decision

IMPROVISED SCENES

Experiment with style:

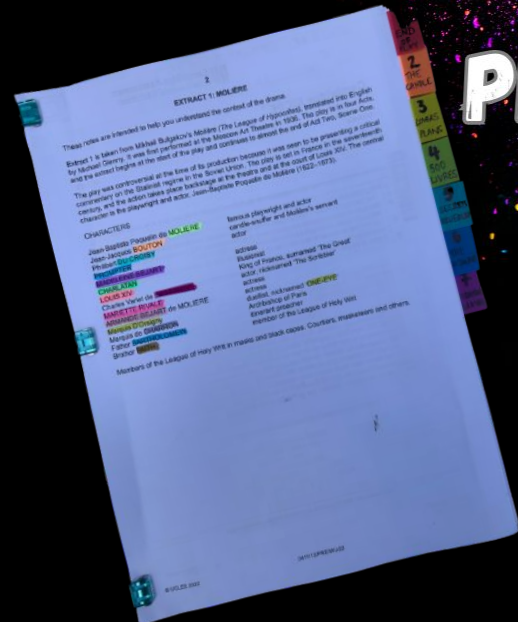
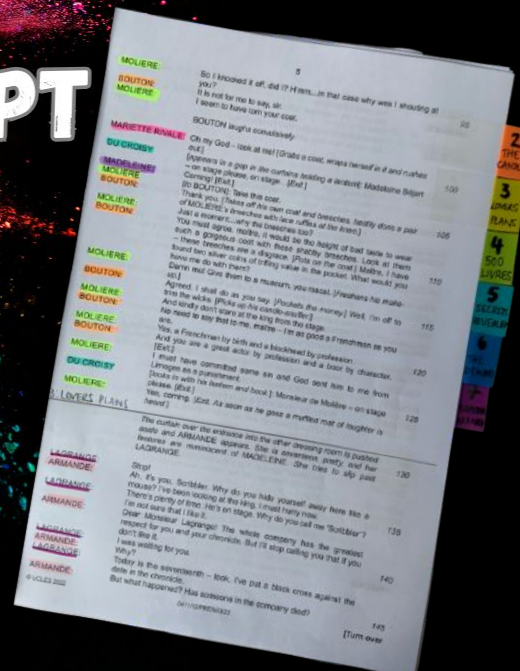


1. Agree what your "given circumstances" of the scene are. Where are you? Why are you there? What is the space like? How did you come to be there? What is the history of your relationship with this person.
2. Play the scene out as realistically as you can. Use the "Magic if". What if I were really having to do this in real life? What might I do? How can I feed that into my character?
3. Now try to heighten the emotion of your scene a bit in order to play it more for comedy than for realism. The scene should still feel realistic, but perhaps the characters are rather more unlikeable or react to each other in a way that makes the audience laugh. How can you play up that comedy?

PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

You will be working closely with this script for the next few months so get it organised, so you can access what you need easily, and you can easily see who is in a scene.

The script is 18 scenes so we've combined scenes into 7 units that are slightly longer bits of text to work with in each lesson.



PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

Dividing into units



In drama analysis, directors and designers often break down the script into units. This makes it easier to analyse what is going on. Different directors/designers use different ways to decide where a unit starts and ends. Often an entrance or exit of a character is useful as it means, characters intentions change. Each play is unique as is each decision about how to do this.

We like to give each unit a name to help us remember it and to be able to talk about it with our class / company. We try to choose names that are simple and easy reminders of events. For this play, we've given each scene a name and put scenes together into units A-G

UNIT	SCENE	PAGES	LINES	SCENE TITLE
A	1	3 - 4	1-73	A KILLER PITCH
	2	4 - 5	74-118	PITCH IS DITCHED
B	3	5 - 6	119-167	THEIR SITUATION
	4	6 - 7	168-235	DRAMA FRIENDS MEET
C	5	7 - 9	236-333	SCHOOL FRIENDS MEET
	6	10	334-356	REPORT BACK
D	7	10 - 11	357-414	DON'T RENEW
	8	11 - 12	415-437	VICKI GOT THE MOVIE
E	9	12	438-460	WHO'S OUR KATHERINE?
	10	12 - 13	461-493	CASTING
	11	13	494-510	AUDITION
F	12	13 - 14	510-568	REFLECTION
	13	15	569-606	BABY & MARRIAGE
	14	15-16	607-630	DOUBTS
G	15	16	631-652	REVENGE
	16	16-17	653-668	VICKI TELLS NELLI
	17	17	669-676	ON HOLD
	18	17-18	677-720	THE GOLDEN GIRL

PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

Dividing into units

1	UNIT	S C E N E	P A G E S	LINES	SCENE TITLE	LOCATION/ PLACE	SEASON/ DATE/TIME	PLOT	MOOD/TONE	SCENIC: SET / PROPS / COSTUME	TECHNICAL: LIGHT / SOUND	IDEAS / THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS	C E L I A	R O H A N	V I C K I	R E A L L Y	N E A T E
2	A	1	3 - 4	1-73	A KILLER PITCH	Not suggested- assume their home		Rohan berates Celia for her obsession with her phone. He seeks her attention to run his pitch by her. She is critical, has little faith. He never gets to deliver the pitch before she is distracted by a call from Vicki.	Tone is light; characters are irritable, impatient with each other	Phone							

You can complete this document as a class or as individuals. You get deeper understanding and more attention to detail if you each do your own but you share ideas (and workload) if you do it together. Or you could each do your own then share and create a central document. It helps enormously with noticing details and understanding design requirements.

Here's a blank template with just the first one done as an example



[BLANK UNITS THE BIG TIME .xlsx](#)

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FIRST READ

Uniting & Character Study

You can now read the script together and stop to complete your uniting document and begin a character study, so that when you come to do your second read and practical explorations, you know the characters and the plot of the whole extract and can draw on that knowledge in your activities and explorations of staging them. You can keep character notes on the second tab of the uniting sheets or you can keep notes in your script. See next slide.

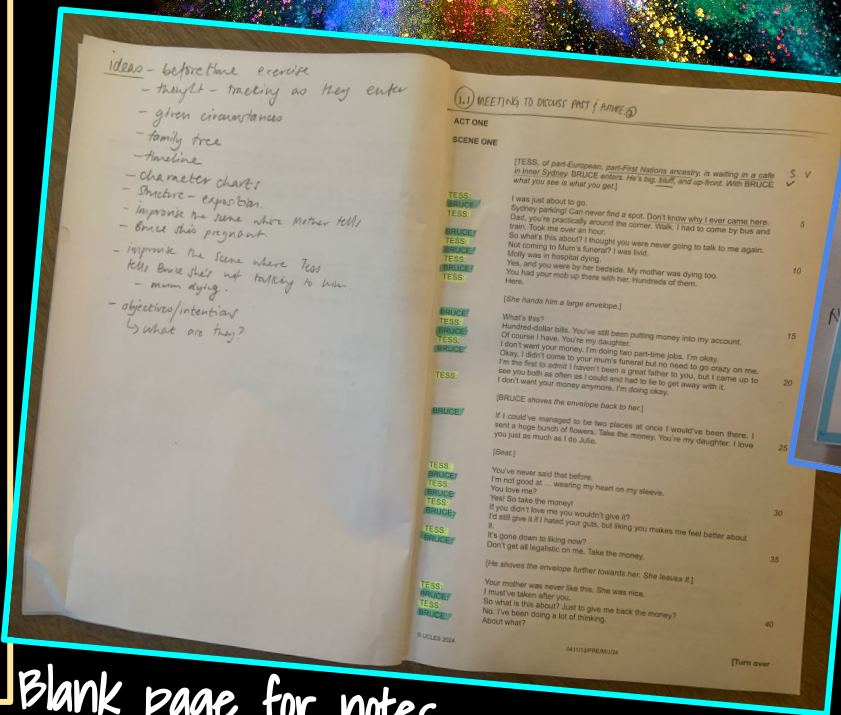
CHARACTER	WHO	AGE(ISH)	APPEARANCE	SAID ABOUT	SAID TO	SAYS	FACTS	QUESTIONS
CELIA	successful soap actor	37						
ROHAN	her partner, writer	46						
VICKI	Celia's old friend from Drama school	39						
ROLLY	Rohan's school friend	46						
NELLI	Celia and Vicki's agent	53						
NATE	a producer	40						

FIRST READ

Uniting & Character Study

TIPS FOR SCRIPTS & NOTES

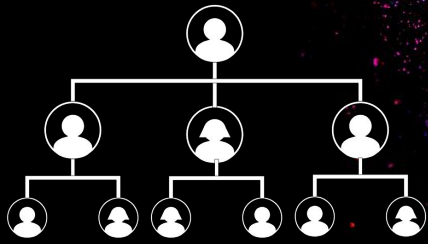
We print our script with a blank page next to each page for notes, diagrams for staging etc. We keep all notes in pencil so we can keep changing them as we go on. On the front inside cover we use post-it notes to keep character notes. We can keep adding to these if needed.



Blank page for notes

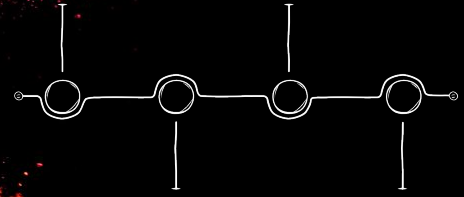


Character Notes



FIRST READ

Timeline and Family Tree



Family Tree

After reading, create a "family tree" or "character map," showing the relationships to each other.

Include: Celia, Rohan, Vicki, Rolly, Nelli, Nate.

Show how each is related to the other.

Extension: pick a quote that shows something about the relationship.

These do not need to be neat and pretty diagrams: a quick pencil sketch will do the job that you need it to. It's to help you to understand the relationships and history. It's the act of doing it that is the learning.

Timeline

Create a timeline of events from Nelli's birth as she's the oldest through to present day. Add in all notable events. If you're not sure of exact dates, make an educated guess. Include drama school, the drowning, Rohan's successful script, Celia starting on the soapie, Celia and Rohan meeting etc.

THE UNDERSTUDY

DRAMA & THEATRE RESOURCES

This resource is a freebie from

www.the-understudy.org

It is designed to help you set up your scripts so that you will find working with our slides to explore this play much easier. And you will feel organised before you embark on your exploration.

The full set of resources are published over a series of dates as we write and publish as we go, due to the time constraints of receiving new material each September. For more details, go to:

<https://www.the-understudy.org/iqcsedramapre-release>

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