

ADAPTED FROM

HENCEFORWARD

BY ALAN AYCKBOURN

THE UNDERSTUDY
DRAMA & THEATRE RESOURCES

PRE-READING &
FIRST READ



Dear Teachers,

This is our freebie resource to introduce the second extracts of the Pre-Release Material for May/June 2026.

We like to introduce the plays in a fun way then do a first read together before starting the detailed practical exploration and associated written practice.. It means that students have read the extract at least twice and gives them time to 'digest' the plot and characters, before coming to their practical work and written work. It means 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 15 pages or less means they can keep on top of it and feel successful.

The second play's first set of slides for practical exploration is due out on or before Sunday 16 November.

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**

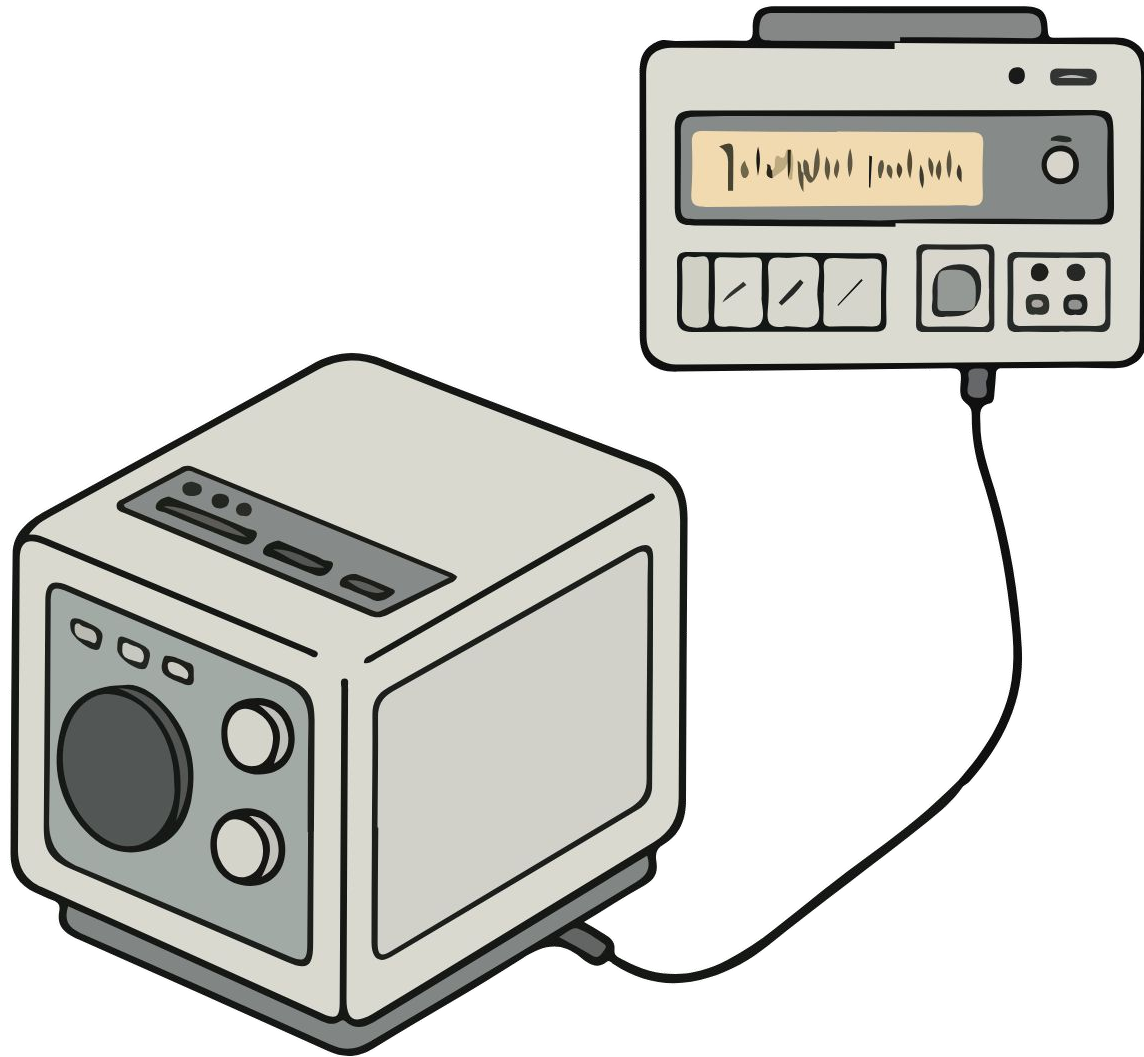
INTRO LESSON

1. Prepare the resources by printing out the image printouts below. Place them around your room.
2. Have students enter with music playing and investigate.
3. After a while, they can make some guesses about themes and ideas in the play. Can they guess at a plot?
4. Creative interpretations. Groups of 3-5. Create a piece of drama inspired by the images.
5. Students should walk the space, following the instructions, creating the idea of a controlled society.
6. Students devise a scene inside an apartment where technology is used for comfort, and there is a fear of the outside. Use music to add atmosphere.
7. Share and discuss. What are they now curious about? What sense do they get of this world? This play?
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.

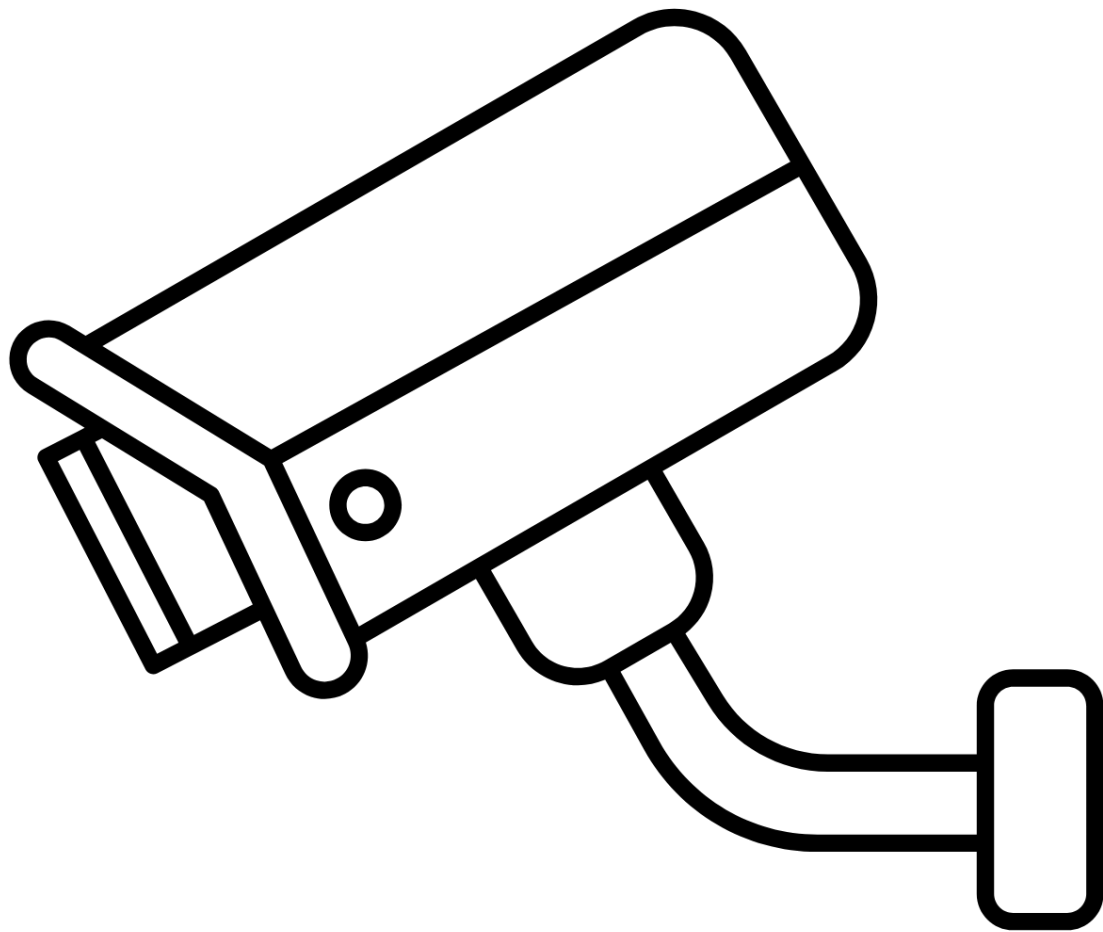
MUSIC OPTIONS

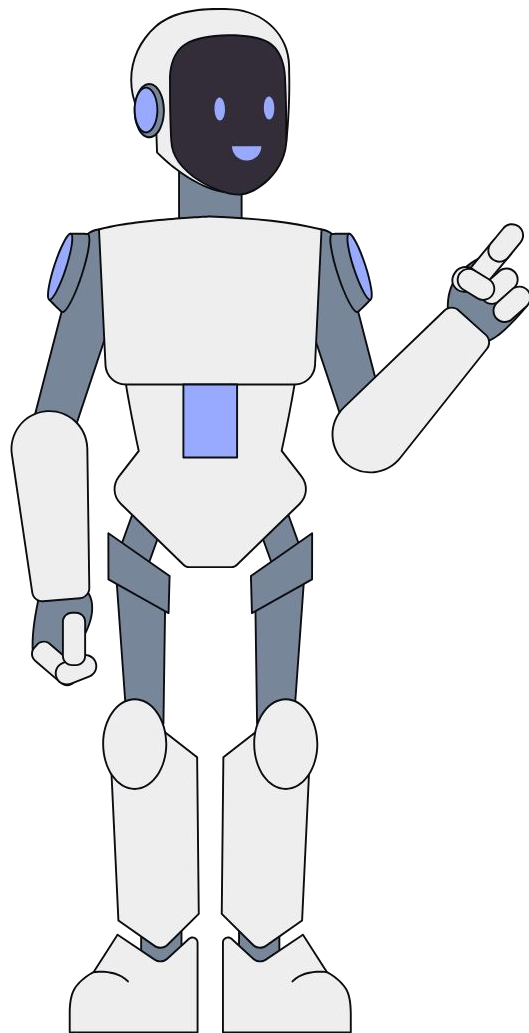
- Frozen in Time - Dystopian Dark Ambience
- Night City Market
- SECTOR COMPILATION | 6 Hour Dystopian

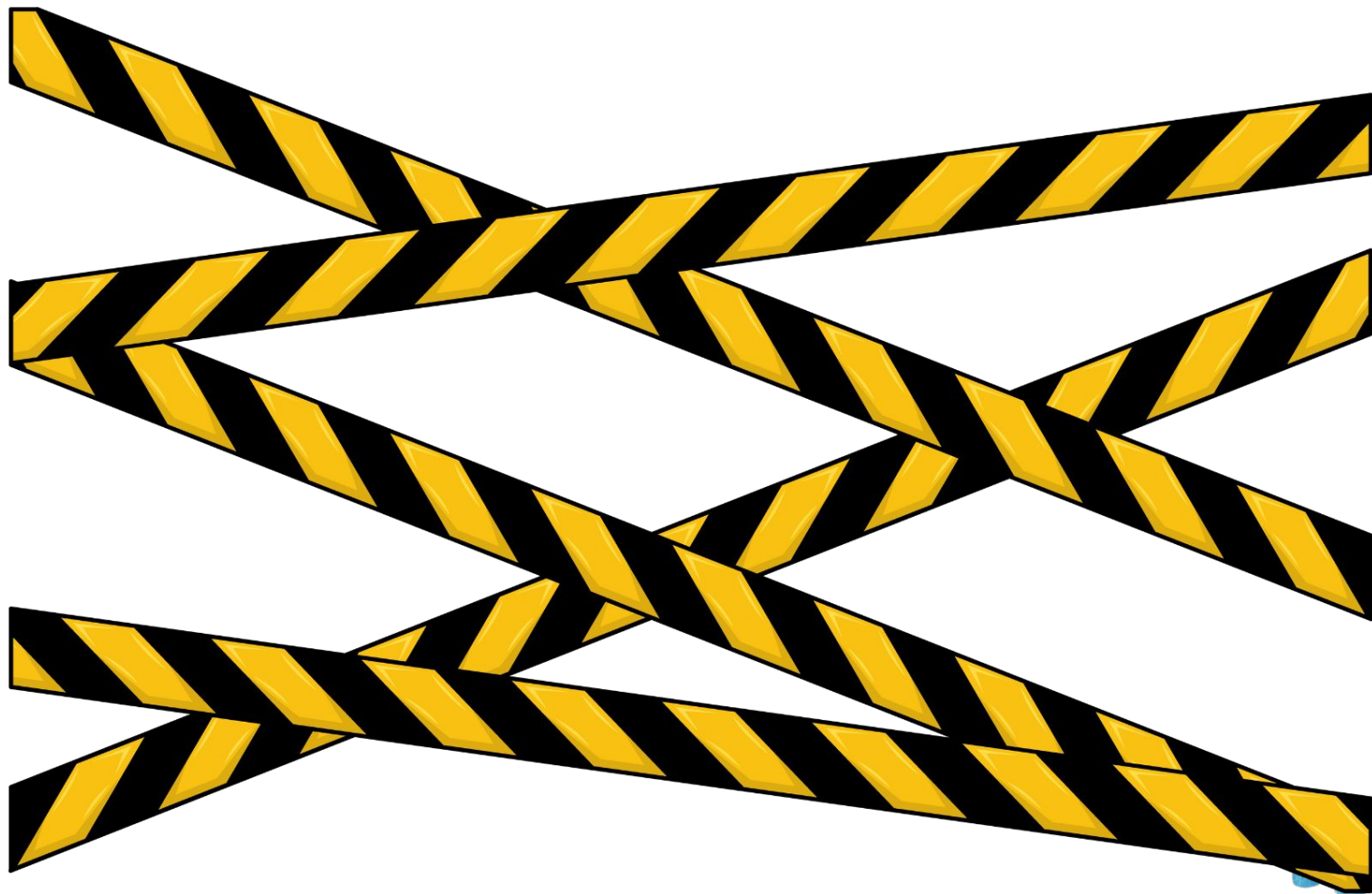


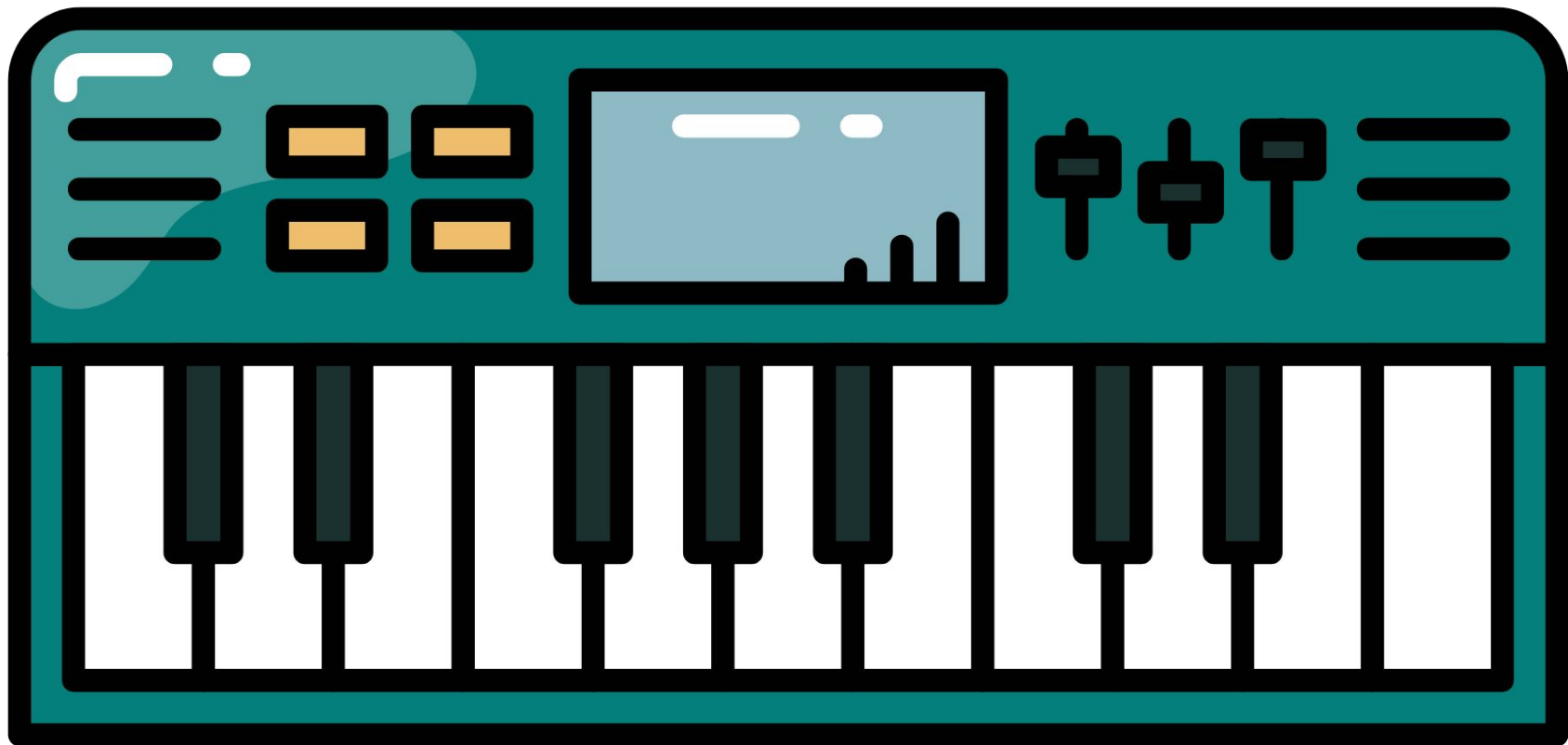


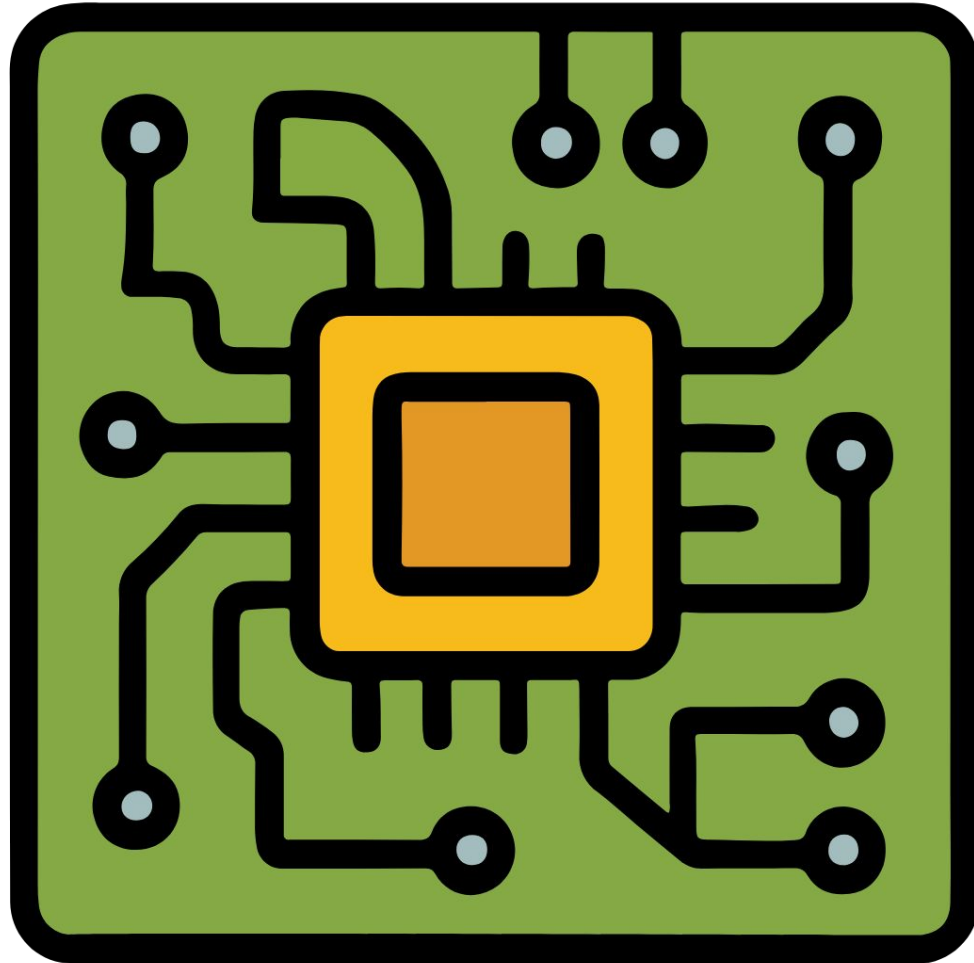












CREATIVE INTERPRETATION

In groups of 3-5, create a piece of drama based on what you've seen so far. You don't need to incorporate everything. Your piece can be realistic or stylised. It can be a scene or physical theatre or a mix. Text or no text. You can add music.

"CONTROLLED SOCIETY"

1. Students walk around the space freely (normal world).
2. The teacher introduces rules gradually:
 - You may only walk in straight lines.
 - You must freeze when someone looks at you.
 - You must copy whoever is nearest to you.
 - You must speak only in numbers.
3. As rules increase, movements should become more mechanical and anxious.
4. Introduce one 'controller' who observes and corrects mistakes, reinforcing the feeling of surveillance.

REFLECT

- HOW DID IT FEEL WHEN YOUR FREEDOM WAS REDUCED?
- WHAT PHYSICAL AND VOCAL QUALITIES CREATED CONTROL OR FEAR?

DEVisING TASK: "INSIDE THE APARTMENT"

In small groups (4-6). Create a short 1-2 minute non-verbal sequence set in an imagined flat in the same world as the previous exercise. The scene should include:

- Technology controlling emotion (e.g. people relying on machines for comfort or instruction).
- Isolation or fear of the outside world.
- An attempt at human connection that feels awkward or artificial.
- A malfunctioning robot that misreads human emotion.
- Focus on physicality, pace, and soundscape (vocally created or layered using devices).

You should include:

- Stillness and precise robotic movement for technological control.
- Sudden breaks of emotion to show human conflict beneath.
- Repetition or looping to reflect monotony and programming.

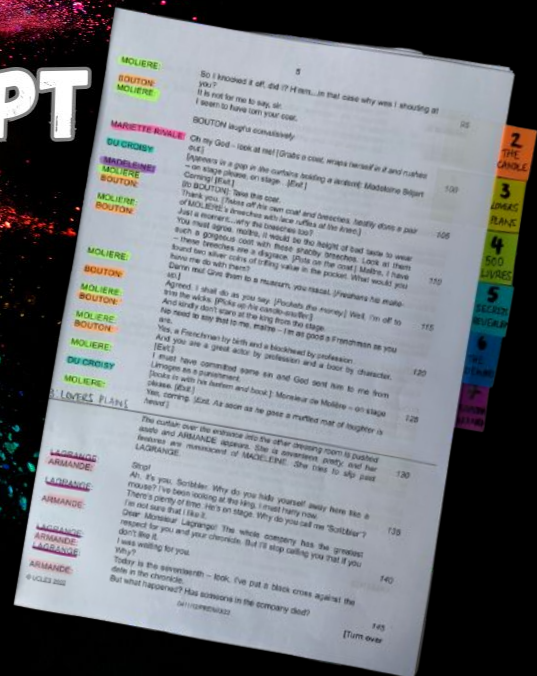
REFLECT

- HOW DID PHYSICAL CHOICES SHOW CONTROL OR FEAR?
- WHAT EMOTIONS DID THE AUDIENCE FEEL: LAUGHTER, UNEASE, PITY?
- WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE PLAY YOU WILL EXPLORE?

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 two acts. We've broken those down into seven units for our learning.



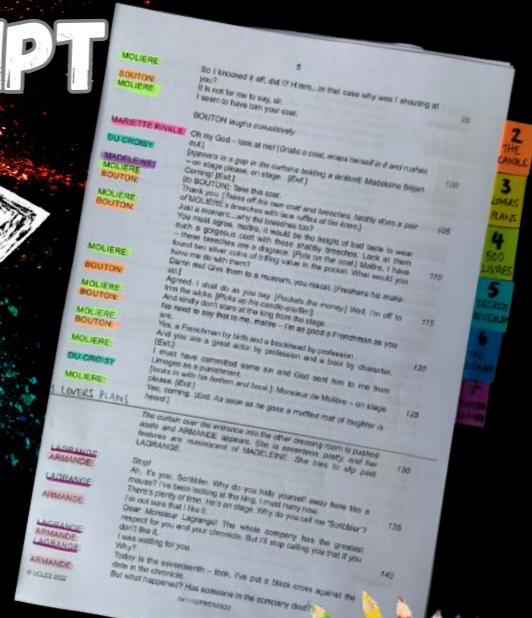
THE UNDERSTUDY
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PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

Choosing a colour for each character and highlighting your whole script allows you to see who is in each scene and makes reading in class (or to yourself) and experimenting with scenes much easier. It also allows you to see how prominent a character is.

Adding tabs to mark each section makes finding your place easy and helps organise the script in your head.



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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

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

UNIT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAGES	15-26	16 - 18	18 - 19	19 - 21	21 - 22	22 - 25	25 - 27
LINES	1 - 67	27 - 121	122 - 182	183 - 251	252 - 333	334 - 442	443 - 520
NAME	MESSAGES	REBOOTING NAN	MALFUNCTIONING	THE MEETING	JEROME'S FIANCÉE	SHE'S AN ACTRESS, SINGER AND A DANCER?	LUPUS CALLS AGAIN

PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

Dividing into units

A C T	UNIT	P A G E S	L I N E S	UNIT TITLE	LOCATION/ PLACE	SEASON/ DATE/ TIME	PLOT	MOOD/TONE	SCENIC:	SET / PROPS / COSTUME	TECHNICAL: LIGHT / SOUND	IDEAS / THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS	J E R O M E W A T K I N S	M E R V Y N B I C K E R D Y K E	N A N Z O E	L U P U S
1	1	15-26	1 - 67	MESSAGES	Jerome's high-rise flat, in a very run-down area somewhere in England where it is not safe to walk the streets.	Unclear	We are in a flat, and it is unclear what time of day it is. On a large video screen, we see Jerome, at the front door, struggling to open it. When he enters, he dumps three carrier bags and switches on the answering machine. On the sofa, motionless, is Nan. The video/sound console shows The Department of Social Services logo. The first message is from Mervyn Bickerdyke; he has been trying to get hold of Jerome and wants him to call him back. The second message is also from Mervyn Bickerdyke, again asking to speak to him on a matter of some importance. Jerome groans during both messages, commenting that he won't be calling him back. During this, Jerome takes the shopping bags into the kitchen and returns with a tinfoil food package and a palm-sized section of printed circuitry. There is another beep from the answering machine, and Lupus appears on the screen. Lupus tells him that he's having financial trouble, so he will have to take 'that job with those geriatrics'. He is worried Deborah will leave him, and it looks like she will. Throughout the video, Lupus is being hit with a ball and several other flying missiles by a child. He groans throughout and forwards the message until it ends.	Chaos & willful ignorance	- Living room of a flat - Video /sound console system: - Answering machine - A logo: The Department of Social Services - Video of Lupus - A large wall-mounted video screen - A hall lights (how much can we see, other than just light?) - 3x Carrier bags - Walking stick - Sofa - Kitchen - Tinfoil food package - Palm-sized section of printed circuitry - T-shirt, Music is a living thing - A cupboard beneath the console - A argle loose-leaf manual	- Light from a video/sound console system - Very little light, it is unclear what time of day it is - Light from a large wall-mounted video screen - Video of Jerome at the front door, inserting his key and struggling, and muttering as he opens his front door - Hall lights - Living room lights - Introductory beep of an answering machine - 2x answe phone messages from Mervyn Bickerdyke	- How much of the hallway do we need to see? - How much of the kkcthen is visible? - Is the video/sound console system mounted on the wall?					

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 HENCEFORWARD
UNITS.xlsx

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FIRST READ

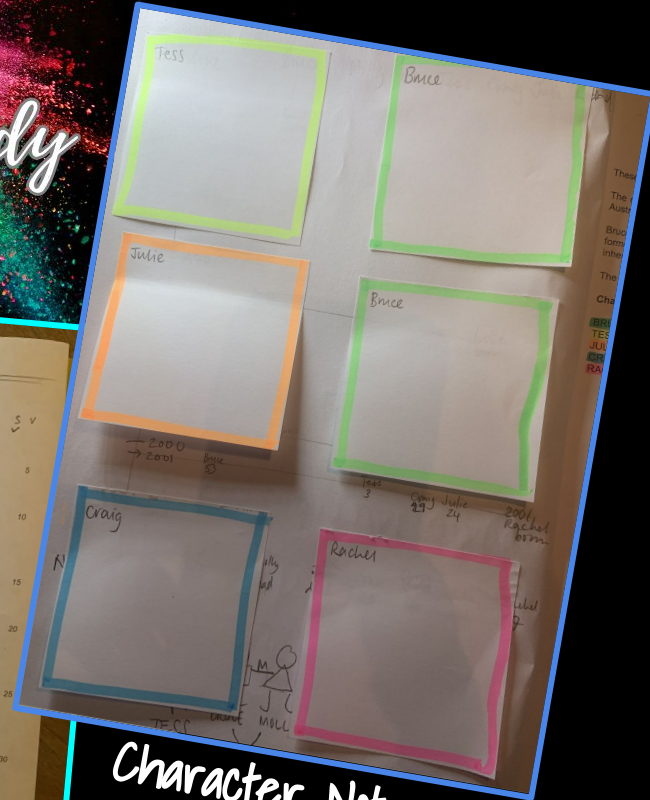
Uniting & Character Study

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

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AGE	Further Notes
JEROME WATKINS	A composer	About 40	
CORINNA	Jerome's ex-wife	Mid 30s	
MERVYN BICKERDYKE	A welfare officer	Mid 30s	
NAN	A robot built by Jerome		
ZOË	The reprogrammed version of Nan, who appears in Act 2 as Jerome's fiancée		
LUPUS	(on video), a musician friend of Jerome		

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



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>

