



A level English and work-related learning

issues and strategies

a project by:



Credits

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Preface

Work-related learning and English

LSN funded this project, undertaken by the English and Media Centre, to explore links and activities related to the delivery of A Level English and the skills needed for future life, learning and employment. Four teachers took part in the project, two teachers of A Level English Language and two of English Literature.

The project team worked on practical case studies in their own schools or colleges. They sought to create classroom assignments that would develop transferable skills appropriate to both advanced level study and the world of work.

The project examined definitions of work-related learning, drawing particularly on QCA's advisory documents and previous work undertaken by LSN. In order to identify the transferable skills developed in the assignments they devised, they explored different forms of assessment, considering which would be most fruitful in the context of A Level teaching.

One of the aims of the project was to identify potential areas where such work could be developed in the future. While the team recognised the rich potential for work-related learning within existing A Level English curricula, they also considered the additional possibilities that might be offered by the reforms to A Level due to be implemented in 2008. In particular, the Extended Project and the increase in A Level English coursework may provide scope for more open-ended and outward-looking assignments, with a stronger focus on skills and bringing the adult, working world more into focus within the academic curriculum.

This project focused on work-related learning in English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature. Media Studies, Performing Arts and Communication A Levels present significantly different issues and could each, in its own right, be the topic of a whole other project. The appendix to this report suggests just some of the new directions that these A Level subjects are taking.

The work carried out by the English and Media Centre and its partners schools and colleges takes a big step on the path to enabling teachers to place English at the heart of the work-related curriculum.

Ian Duckett

Development Adviser, Vocational Learning, Learning and Skills Network

Section 1 Introduction

In this paper we are seeking to engage in a long standing debate about English teaching and its relationship to work-related learning - to bring ourselves up to speed so that we can start to ponder, manage and respond to the demands that will no doubt be made of us during the next decade. In particular, the LSN/ EMC project was set up with the remit of exploring whether there are aspects of work-related learning that could be fruitfully developed in A Level English Literature and A Level English Language.

What is work-related learning?

Work-related learning lies at the heart of successive governments' attempts to achieve parity between academic and vocational qualifications, and, as such, continues to re-invent and redefine itself.

Vocational and *pre-vocational* courses became *applied* and are now both *applied* and *specialised*; *core skills* became *key skills* and *wider key skills*, and now, within the context of 21st-century 14-19 educational reform, will become *functional skills* and *personal, learning and thinking skills*. Those of us involved in delivering the language element of work-related qualifications have been part of CPVE teams, GNVQ teams, BTEC teams, Applied GCSE and A Level teams; and now we can look forward to being part of the *lines of learning* teams for the new specialised national diplomas.

The QCA website defines work-related learning in the following way.

Work-related learning describes a broad range of activities for students of all ages. These activities help students learn about the world of work by experiencing and preparing for it. Work-related learning takes place in the context of the world of work, to help students develop knowledge, skills and understanding that will be useful in that world.

Schools can enable students to acquire work-related learning by providing opportunities to:

- *recognise, practise and develop enterprise and employability skills*
- *carry out tasks and activities in work contexts*
- *meet people from various employment sectors (and see different work roles and working conditions)*
- *experience (directly or indirectly) various working practices and environments*
- *engage with the ideas, challenges and applications present in the business world (and creatively apply knowledge to deal with and solve problems)*
- *use their experience of work (including work experience, part-time jobs and community placements) to extend their understanding of work, work roles, working conditions, workplace rights and responsibilities*
- *research and interrogate labour-market information to develop an awareness of the extent and diversity of local and national employment opportunities*
- *see how their own abilities and attributes relate to possible careers (and make informed choices about careers based on an understanding of the alternatives).*

(QCA website)

Employers value work-related learning because it helps develop personal and interpersonal skills, fosters attributes such as self-motivation, sharpens analytical skills, enhances subject knowledge and subject-specific skills and provides an insight into what makes businesses tick.

(‘The Work-related Learning Report’, announced by Margaret Hodge at the CRAC/UCAS Admissions to Higher Education Conference, 19th March 2002)

A historical perspective

English teachers have had a long history of ambivalence, and perhaps even hostility, towards initiatives that are work-related or have a functional focus. This scepticism is the product of a number of legitimate concerns that:

- a focus on skills for future life might squeeze out other important elements of the subject, such as Literature, creative writing and personal response
- English could be seen as a ‘servicing’ subject, teaching ‘basic skills’ of reading, writing, speaking and listening to enable students to access the rest of the curriculum
- definitions of ‘literacy’, ‘basic skills’, ‘functional skills’ and other formulations might be reductive and narrow, simplifying a complex set of skills and understandings into a set of litmus tests for literacy, such as whether students can use the apostrophe or spell particular words correctly
- teaching skills out of context is often ineffective and uninspiring
- students don’t necessarily transfer skills, if taught out of the context of an engaging subject-based content.

As English teachers we have struggled to balance learning that encourages critical and analytical thinking, with teaching that encourages uses of language that are functional and appropriate, often seeing the former as just as ‘work-related’ as the latter. It’s a view somewhat at odds with the popular interpretation of ‘work-related’. Through the continuing reform of 14-19 education, and, as a result of the Tomlinson debate, we have moved closer to an acceptance of the importance of work-related skills being integrated into the mainstream curriculum; many, however, remain sceptical about the ‘what’ and the ‘how’.

Changing ideas about English as a subject

Models of what the subject English is and should be have always been contested. Bethan Marshall in her book *English Teachers: The Unofficial Guide* (Nov 2000) identifies five different types of English teachers: Old grammarians; Pragmatists; Liberals; Technicians; Critical Dissenters. Others have identified the ‘personal development’ view of English teaching and the ‘literary heritage’ approach. Since the late 1970s, when a ‘pragmatic’ or ‘technical’ approach was the exception rather than the rule, changes have taken place in the education system which have altered the climate and shifted perceptions of the subject. There has been a new culture of government intervention (under both Conservative and Labour administrations) to re-mould the English curriculum, giving much greater emphasis to literacy, non-fiction texts and the public accountability of English teachers. In the autumn of 1976 the then Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan started what came to be known as ‘The Great Debate’ about education, arguing that what happened within schools should be the subject of public discussion and decision-making rather than the preserve of educationalists working behind closed doors. Callaghan offered a new way of thinking about the aims of education:

The goals of our education... are clear enough. They are to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work. Not one or the other but both... There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills. Nor at the other extreme must they be technically efficient robots.

In the late 1970s 16-19-year-olds on day release to college were offered communication and numeracy workshops rather than the old liberal studies approach. In the 1980s, with the introduction of TVEI, CPVE and other pre-vocational initiatives, some English teachers began to engage with different ways of thinking about the subject. Educationalists like Peter Medway found in TVEI a more radical agenda than they had anticipated, an agenda that opened up possibilities for a more practical approach to English. As Medway now says, on his Kings College (London) website:

TVEI... had been the last serious attempt to address the needs of students who preferred to apply their intelligence to making and doing: designing medical aids, mounting theatrical productions, running small-holdings that made money and doing stuff with local firms and hospitals - and getting much of their maths, English and science in the course of these activities. Around TVEI, moreover, a serious academic field had begun to develop that sought to theorise the nature of the practical and the place it should occupy in comprehensive education for the whole population.

...Employed on the National Evaluation of TVEI Curriculum...I was assigned, on a basis of complete initial ignorance (I was an English person), to look at D&T. I was astonished to find far more impressive spoken English occurring in workshops than in the English classroom. Impressed with TVEI (also against our initial anti-vocationalism instincts) and convinced that English could learn from it, Stephen Clarke and I got together with a group of teachers from ten schools across the north of England in a project, 'Developing English for TVEI'.

Medway now bemoans the loss of TVEI when the then Education Minister Kenneth Baker moved towards a more academic National Curriculum.

Despite Medway's valid comments about the marginalisation of vocational education, in the 1990s and 2000s the introduction of the National Curriculum, the KS3 Literacy Strategy and the current Strategy, have all contributed to a significant shift in the nature of English teaching in schools. In the late 1960s and 1970s pupils aged 11-16 were spending the majority of their time in English lessons studying literary texts and writing narratives and other literary forms, pupils in 2006 spend significant amounts of time on non-fiction genres and writing for a range of different non-literary audiences and purposes. Although not vocational education, these aspects of the academic curriculum are more work-related.

Coupled with these political changes has been a revolution in the wider world as a result of new technologies and media and this has contributed to changes in the English curriculum; English is no longer seen as a print-only subject, while ideas as basic as what is a text have needed constant updating.

A Level English – the recent past

A Level English Literature has remained largely untouched by these developments, even though it has been subject to many other pressures. By contrast, the newer subjects of English Language and English Language & Literature have had less cultural 'baggage' to divest themselves of, and a quite different set of academic purposes. This has allowed them to focus on a much wider range of text types and processes, many of which could be seen as having work-related, applied, or specialised relevance. English Language focuses on data from the 'real world': transcripts of job interviews; examples of ways of comparing interactional styles in conversation; short extracts of child/carer talk; a strong emphasis on contexts that students would be likely to come across in their non-academic lives. Nevertheless, all three English subjects are still characterised as academic rather than as having any explicitly vocational elements. Language A Level has struggled to gain credence in H.E., often because of universities' lack of awareness of the course demands, rather than the course's own failings. Having to justify itself as an academic discipline has, perhaps, militated against any conscious development of work-related or vocational aspects of the subject. In all three Englishes students are individually assessed, almost entirely on written outcomes, either in coursework or in terminal examinations. (Oral assessment is only offered by one Awarding Body as an option in one module and is rarely taken up by schools and colleges.) The Assessment Objectives in all three subjects, as in A Levels in general, are defined in academic terms, with skills and knowledge specific to the subject discipline, rather than more generic learning skills.

Attempts to assess broader skills undertaken in academic subjects in the Key Skills initiative of Curriculum 2000, have, on the whole, proved unpopular and unworkable. Trying to match checklists of skills to a curriculum with its own quite independent methods of assessment, has proved to be an onerous 'going through the motions' rather than a genuine way of recognising achievement or a useful part of formative assessment to influence future learning.

The *content* of the subjects has been debated, but largely in academic terms (in English Literature, how many texts, what kinds of texts, what elements of the canon, what periods of literature, for instance). A Level English has not been called upon to justify itself in terms of the life skills it offers to students, though, with the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and beyond, it has been questioned as to its ability to deliver the academic skills and knowledge required by Higher Education. The changes to A Level in Curriculum 2000 have led many to question whether A Levels have become too focused on objectives and written exams, to the point that students are losing the broader learning skills and approaches required for independent study - self-organisation, a thirst for knowledge, risk-taking and critical thinking.

The British Baccalaureat and the Tomlinson Report

Despite changes in the structure of A Levels and within the A Level curriculum in Curriculum 2000, the bipartite system of A Levels and vocational qualifications has remained essentially unchanged. Nevertheless, there are some teachers and educationalists who, throughout this whole period, have been interested in looking more critically at A Level English from the point of view of its relationship to life skills and work-related learning. In the late 1980s and early 90s educationalists in the Post-16 Unit of the Institute of Education and Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) were questioning the academic/vocational divide - and not just in terms of parity of esteem: they also challenged the necessity for such a rigid distinction between the kinds of learning normally associated with each pathway. Developmental work on a British Baccalaureat included looking for ways to allow students to follow mixed programmes, in which the best aspects of vocational learning (such as group assessment, problem-solving tasks, oral assessment, work-related contexts) could be offered to students following predominantly academic studies, with students following vocational courses being offered more academic input.

The Tomlinson Report of 2004 took up some of these themes but, much to the consternation of many educationalists, this report was shelved by the government and much more piecemeal reforms are now being introduced. Some schools and colleges have abandoned A Levels altogether, in favour of a continental Baccalaureat which not only offers more freedom in the selection of texts but also provides different ways of assessing students, including oral assessment and extended project work. The Bac is perceived as developing the kind of learning skills that some feel have been missing from A Level, in its current form. Perhaps surprisingly, this course is seen as not only being more challenging academically, but also as having more to offer in terms of future life and learning.

11-18 schools have had to cope with a number of initiatives which have foregrounded work-related learning in departmental and staffroom discussions, for example records of achievement, Progress File, Citizenship and the statutory KS4 work-related learning curriculum.

Regardless of what has been happening at the level of government initiatives and changing educational policies, many A Level English teachers have chosen to focus attention and interest on underlying skills and understandings, recognising their responsibility to teach not just a set text or a topic area but ways of learning that will stand students in good stead in their future learning and lives. English teachers who understand the importance of this have taken seriously the issue of developing an A Level pedagogy that will encourage students to become independent, critical thinkers and give them the tools for research, problem-solving and team-work, even though the pressure of AS and A2 exams has sometimes seemed to militate against this, perhaps even encouraging a more content-based, lecturing style of teaching. Coursework in particular has provided opportunities for the kind of extended research required in Higher Education courses and in future working life, the Language A Level investigation being a particularly good example of this.

Fresh thinking about A Level English

With changes to AS and A2 being introduced in 2008, it is a good time to think afresh about English A Levels, the skills that students learn that might be useful to them in their future lives, as well as questioning the way we've come to define the content of the subject as purely academic, rather than as having any vocational interest or reference points. With the introduction of the Extended Project, there may also be fresh opportunities to validate learning that reaches beyond the confines of the A Level curriculum, with projects that incorporate more practical and problem-solving approaches, as well as 'real world' contexts. Equally, the increased weighting for coursework in 2008 (up from 30% to 40%), greater opportunities for oral assessment and the new emphasis in English Literature on the study of more texts in a wider variety of ways, may offer scope for open-ended, risk-taking individual research, and more opportunities for work-related, applied or specialised learning.

Definitions of work-related learning and English

In relation to English teaching, work-related learning has been interpreted in significantly different ways. There is no one clear-cut definition that all parties would agree to, as the possibilities below suggest.

1. Key skills, Basic skills, Functional skills

There have been on-going debates about the importance and scope of skills for future life and learning, as well as the best ways of teaching them. As we write, QCA is working on a pilot scheme to assess 'functional skills', at GCSE and beyond. This is due to be up and running nationally from September 2009. (See Appendix 2 for QCA's current formulation of functional skills in English.) The national debate in the press tends to focus on this aspect of education for working life, to the exclusion of all others. The 2006 report by the CBI on skills for work entitled *Working on the Three Rs* continues a long tradition of calls from business for better literacy skills. Richard Lambert, the Director General of the CBI is quoted as saying:

We must raise our game on basic skills. Britain simply can't match the low labour costs of China and India. We have to compete on quality, and that means improving our skills base, starting with the basics... Employers' views on numeracy and literacy are clear - people must read and write fluently and be able to carry out basic mental arithmetic.

2. PLTS (Personal, Learning, Thinking Skills)

One of the more pedagogically interesting and dynamic aspects of the latest 14-19 reforms is the introduction of Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills, which underpin both the general and specialised 14-19 diplomas at levels one, two and three. Instead of the usual list of skills, they are presented primarily as 6 roles: *independent enquirers, creative thinkers, reflective learners, team workers, self-managers and effective participants*.

They reflect thinking that has moved beyond lists and tick-boxes to recognise that there are generic skills and qualities which young people require to be successful at school and throughout their future learning and future lives, at F.E., H.E., on a gap year or in employment and training. Later in this paper we have related these skills specifically to some of the activities and case studies included. (See Appendix 1 for a full outline of PLTS.)

3. Work experience

There has been a long-standing recognition that students benefit from an experience of working life and opportunities to reflect on that experience. This has tended to be provided as an add-on to the curriculum, rather than integrated into subjects or subject teaching; as the definitions at the beginning of this paper suggest, it has been closely linked with work-related learning. Since work-related learning became statutory at KS4 more has been done pre-16 to offer students opportunities to use work experience to generate level 1 and level 2 coursework. GCSE English folders now contain interviews and reflective diaries from work placements.

4. Bringing adults from the wider world into the classroom

Again, this activity is often seen as an add on or optional extra, rather than an essential part of the curriculum, and happens only rarely in English. A writer, poet or dramatist is generally asked in to help students focus on literary texts. Since mentoring and buddying have increased, however, the role of adults in the classroom has developed a wider brief, encompassing the skills and qualities needed to be successful, rather than focusing on the specifics of their particular job, and linking to PLTS.

5. Simulating the working environment or working contexts in the classroom

There is a recognition that not all work-related learning has to take place in a real working environment or with adults from outside the educational sphere. Simulating working contexts is another way of offering work-related experiences. (See case studies beginning on page 13.)

6. Drawing on work contexts to re-infect the curriculum

Whilst this is a strong feature of vocational and pre-vocational courses, the work context rarely figures in the A Level curriculum. This is, at least in part, because of the way in which the specifications are drawn up, the definitions of subject knowledge involved and what students are ultimately assessed on. As the case studies and activities outlined in this paper suggest, this is an approach with considerable potential for the so-called academic subjects.

The remit of this project

Because of the changing context within which we find ourselves and the current developing reforms, as a project group we decided to adopt the broader definitions of 'work-related learning' listed on pages 10-11, rather than the narrower definitions of functional skills. We found the Personal, Learning and Thinking roles and Skills a useful tool for both generating ideas for the curriculum and helping students to think about the development of skills for future life. We were also particularly interested in considering ways in which work contexts could be used to reinfect the curriculum.

We have explored ways of:

- developing work-related learning in relation to A Level here and now
- projecting forward to think about how work-related learning in English A Level might connect with up-and-coming initiatives, such as the changes to A Levels in 2008 and the introduction of the Level 3 Extended Project (as part of the General and Specialised Diploma).

The project has proceeded on the basis that work-related learning in English A Level might include some or all of the following:

- classroom activities in which the academic content is reinflected, to incorporate a 'real world' dimension
- activities, perhaps involving conventional English A Level content, that develop work-related skills, or skills for progression
- ways of developing the 'beyond the curriculum' offer for English students, to give them access to the world beyond the classroom for example, work experience related to the English subjects, invited speakers and so on
- simulated experiences that take students beyond the classroom - role-plays, simulations, games
- ways of reflecting on the kinds of skills being developed, to highlight how they might be relevant to future progression and adult life.

Section 2 Case Studies

This section introduces the three projects undertaken by the teachers involved in the project.

1. Teaching about the Language of Place Names to Year 7 Students

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Context

Bourne Grammar School is a selective school in rural Lincolnshire. It has a large sixth form, taking students from a wide area.

Summary

It is easy to think of 'work-related learning' as a process that introduces students to workplaces with which they will be entirely unfamiliar, a way of making them aware of a wide range of potential careers. Nevertheless, one very fruitful way of introducing work-related learning to A Level students is to use an environment that they already know very well - namely, their school. As a working environment, schools and colleges offer a rich variety of possibilities, through activities such as mentoring younger students, running extra-curricular events and acting as peer mediators and counsellors. For my project, I decided to take this one stage further and engage students in a complete change of roles by putting them in the role of teachers, working with a Year 7 class on an area of study common to both the AS English Language specification and our Year 7 scheme of work.

At Bourne Grammar, Year 12 students are assigned to work with Year 7 forms as prefects, organising activities and acting as 'buddies' to help students make the transition from primary to secondary school. Some Year 12s also help to run clubs and tutor younger students in modern language lessons. This particular activity built on these existing contacts but demanded a much greater level of responsibility from the Year 12s. It also challenged some of their views about the role of the teacher, giving them a very different perspective on a profession whose skills seemed to them to be somewhat 'invisible' - as one of them commented during the review process, 'a lot of what good teachers do is stuff you don't even notice'.

This activity took place in the final weeks of the school year, when Year 12 had returned from study leave. For this particular project, a group of three Year 12 volunteers planned, prepared and taught a lesson on local place names to a Year 7 class. However, the project could take on a whole range of different forms: the Year 12 students could have worked with smaller groups of Year 7s, supporting less able students or helping to extend the more able, or could have worked alongside a teacher as part of a longer sequence of lessons.

The Year 12s - Jack, Jonathan and Chantelle - held three meetings before the lesson so that they could pool ideas, plan their lesson and produce resources. We spent some time discussing what makes a good lesson and talking about how they could use the three-part lesson structure (introduction, main activity, plenary) to establish their 'ownership' of the lesson. They also observed me teaching the Year 7 class so that they could gain a sense of their prior knowledge of the topic and learn the students' names.

The lesson

The lesson itself focused on the topic of place names. The Year 7 class had done some initial work on this topic, using the Oxford English Programme's *Knowledge About Language* textbooks: they knew that place names had different elements and were drawn from different languages, and could make connections between these different elements and a range of historical and geographical features. The Year 12s had the idea of getting them to apply this knowledge to the area around Bourne, to see what conclusions they could draw about the history of the area.

The lesson taught by the Year 12s had the following plan:

Objectives

- To revise existing knowledge about place names.
- To use this knowledge to investigate place names in the area around Bourne, exploring what place names can tell us about the history of this area.

Introduction (led by Chantelle)

- Revision of existing knowledge - individual filling-in-the-gaps exercise to see if students can remember the meanings of some common place name elements. Two minutes to complete.
- Whole-class session to check answers.

Main activity (led by Jack)

- Students, in groups of 4, to identify twenty towns and villages that lie along the A15 between Peterborough and Sleaford, using maps.
- Groups to use own knowledge, copies of the Oxford English Programme textbook and a dictionary of place names to find out and record the meanings of these names.
- Year 12s to circulate and assist.

Plenary (led by Jonathan)

- Each group to contribute two place names and their meanings - recorded on board.
- Whole-class exploration of what these names might tell us about the history of the area around Bourne. Where did these names come from - are they mainly Old English or Old Norse? Can you see any patterns in the spread of settlements? What kind of people settled in this area?

Review

The Year 12s completed an evaluation of the lesson shortly afterwards. I was able to follow up this evaluation with Jack and Jonathan through a semi-structured interview (unfortunately Chantelle was unable to attend). At this interview we also discussed the skills we had identified by the LSN as being an important part of work-related learning, using PLTS (see Appendix 1).

All three students reported that they gained a tremendous amount from working with the Year 7s. They were aware that the task had involved a huge amount of responsibility and commented that this had felt a little daunting. However, all three rose to the challenge very competently and clearly found this very rewarding.

Their reactions to the lesson centred around two themes in particular: first of all, their surprise at how much planning goes into an effective lesson, and second, their sense of how difficult it had been at times to

think on their feet and keep the Year 7s working (especially on a hot day at the end of term!). Jonathan, for instance, commented that he had never really appreciated that lessons need to be planned - in the follow-up interview, he said that it had made him realise that 'if a teacher doesn't plan a lesson, they've got fifty minutes of hell in front of them'. Both Jonathan and Jack reported that they had also been aware of the need to manage their time and see the lesson as an immovable deadline. They drew a contrast between this and the fact that they both have a tendency to treat deadlines as relatively flexible. Interestingly, both of them commented that schools may disadvantage students by being too lenient about deadlines, recognising that in the world of work deadlines simply have to be met. Jonathan in particular recognised the pressure that may arise from this, but commented that some may enjoy the adrenalin rush that comes from this pressure: 'you either thrive on it or you sink'.

All three students interacted very effectively with the Year 7s, and enjoyed working with small groups. They were surprised at how lively the Year 7s were and commented afterwards on how hard they had had to work to get them to focus, leading to an interesting discussion of teaching styles and how effective some teachers are at getting a class to settle and listen without seeming to be overly authoritative. All three observed that some of the Year 7s had a tendency to come up with 'easy' answers rather than really thinking, and recognised that they had had to think on their feet to ask questions that would push their understanding further. Jack commented that it had been useful to observe a lesson with the class beforehand so that he had a sense of which students were more able and which needed more support (and also, which students were hardworking and which needed pushing). He also said that it had been useful to learn some of the students' names so that whole-class discussions did not become dominated by the two or three most confident students - learning names meant that he could invite quieter or less confident students to join in. Jonathan added that he had also learned the need selectively to ignore some of the biggest attention-seekers, and that he had recognised the extent to which teachers need to regulate the dynamics of a group.

The Year 12s recognised that team-teaching in this way is very different to the day-to-day business of teaching, but acknowledged that it has its own challenges. They had to spread themselves across the room rather than bunching together, bounce ideas off each other and fill gaps. They felt that the 'planned' parts of the lesson - the introduction and their explanation of the main task - had been relatively smooth, but that they had lacked confidence in tackling the parts they couldn't really prepare for - such as the fact that they had five spare minutes at the end of the lesson that they needed to fill. In the follow-up interview Jack commented that this had made him appreciate how difficult team-teaching must be - how it relies on careful preparation, knowing each others' strengths and weaknesses, and being prepared to be flexible.

Chantelle, in particular, commented on the demands that the lesson had placed on her communication skills, mentioning the need to rephrase some explanations and simplify concepts. All three were surprised at how much input the Year 7s needed and how demanding they were. They were remarkably patient with the Year 7s and were exhausted at the end of the lesson - all of them commented that they hadn't appreciated quite how hard teaching could be!

The skills

Jonathan and Jack carried out a simple tick-sheet summary of which of the PLTS they felt they had developed in carrying out this project. They felt that they had covered all six main areas at some stage, with creative thinking, self-management and team work being particularly important.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this project was the extent to which it made the students rethink their own experience of school - the insights it gave them into what teachers do and why they do it, and how many competing demands teachers must juggle. They could 'connect their own and others' ideas and experiences', 'question their own and others' assumptions' and 'evaluate experiences and learning to inform future progress', at a point in their lives when they are looking ahead to their final year of secondary school and preparing for the next phase of their education. Putting them in a different role not only gave them an insight into the world of work - it also, I felt, encouraged them to think creatively about themselves as students and made them more reflective and responsible as learners.

Putting students in the role of teachers had the added benefit of boosting their confidence in their own subject knowledge. Chantelle, Jack and Jonathan are all confident students, but it is significant that all were struck by the extent to which they needed to simplify definitions and explain concepts in very straightforward terms for the benefit of the Year 7s. They had to be very sure of what they were trying to explain and answer some quite testing questions. This helped them to consolidate their own understanding of the topic and meant that they were forced to learn some areas off by heart - one of them commented that 'it doesn't inspire confidence if your teacher has to check everything in a book'.

The benefits of a project like this can therefore be wide-ranging. It gives students an insight into a career that can often seem so familiar to them that they take its underlying skills and knowledge base for granted, encouraging them to re-think their perceptions of what their own teachers do every day. It enables them to strengthen their own subject knowledge and gain confidence from the fact that they can teach a lesson to a group of younger students. It also helps to develop the sense of the school as a community, with teachers giving older students positive adult roles to step into and encouraging them to act as role models for those lower down the school. There is much to be gained from using the school as a context for work-related learning - a context that may seem well-known, but that can still present older students with a number of surprises.

2. Producing a Digital Theatre Programme

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Context

City and Islington Sixth Form College is an inner city 6th form college in North London with a very diverse intake both culturally and academically.

Summary

This workshop was based on an outline scheme of work that is included on page 42.

'Producing a digital theatre programme' was designed to be part of the college's AS enrichment programme that takes place over one week each Summer term, after AS exams have finished and before students begin their introduction to A2, and for which there is some funding. It involved a trip to a theatre and a day-long, intensive workshop (that has the potential to be extended). Through engaging students in producing their own theatre programme, its aim was to sharpen the skills and qualities they would need not only in their A2 course (particularly in the synoptic unit), but also in any work-related setting involving the production of text for a particular purpose and audience. With this work-related aspect of the activity in mind, we also mapped the tasks we were asking students to complete against the Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) from the generic learning component of 14-19 specialised diplomas, including the level 3 project. (See annex 1 below.)

The project

We selected 11 students from our teaching groups who had worked particularly hard throughout their AS course and offered the activity to them as a reward for their efforts: 'Come and see a play - *The Overwhelming*, a powerful new play about the Rwandan genocide of the 1990s - and have a day working hard to produce your own theatre programme for the play.' If any needed a little prodding, we stressed how useful it would be for A2 English Literature, not to mention their UCAS personal statements - but most were happy just to come to see a play; then, because they were all inspired by the production, they were only too willing to put in the hard work to produce a theatre programme. Students happened to span the ability range - gaining the following AS results: 2Bs, 4Cs, 3Ds, 2Es. We chose a play which would be challenging for them and for which we could gather a range of support and additional material. We booked the media computer suite (15 Mac computers with QuarkXPress software), a colour printer and, most important, expert technical support. All the materials students would be using were loaded onto the computers in advance. Each student was given a copy of the text and invited to read it, but this was not compulsory. We went to a Wednesday matinee performance and the workshop took place on the following Friday, 10-3pm. Students did not have sight of the material for the programme before the workshop, but there was contextual material in the editions of the text they were given. We asked them not to look at the actual programme on sale when we visited the theatre. By the Friday workshop all had eagerly read the text of the play, and most had read the contextual information it contained.

Resources

- *The Overwhelming* by J.T.Rogers (Faber and Faber)
- Out of Joint: ojo@outofjoint.co.uk, www.outofjoint.co.uk
- *The Overwhelming* background pack, downloadable from: <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/education>
- Background materials collected in advance

The workshop

Introduction: 10.00-11.00

- We welcomed the students and asked them to talk about their impressions of seeing and reading the play.
- We then asked them to discuss what skills and qualities would be involved in producing programme material for five areas: front and back covers; cast list and biographies; reviews; biography of the playwright J.T. Rogers; background/historical information about Rwanda. We invited students, in pairs, to choose the area they would work on for the rest of the day.
- We gave each pair a hard copy of the relevant background resources from which they needed to select material for their area, explaining that all the resources were already loaded onto the computers they would be using. At this point we advised students to limit the print version of the programme to three A3 folded pages or eight A4 pages. The group decided that the pairs doing reviews and the J.T. Rogers biography would therefore only do one page each.

The technology: 11.30-12.00

Because we were using Macs and QuarkXPress desk top publishing software, all students needed an induction, then intensive support to get them going. They understood the basics within half an hour.

Constructing the theatre programme: 12.00-2.30 (including a short lunch break)

Students worked independently, selecting material, planning and designing their pages and experimenting with different layouts. Advice, guidance and opinions were sought and given throughout this session.

Evaluation and discussion: 2.30-3.00

Students filled in pre-prepared evaluation sheets. See annex 2 and the review section which follows.

Review

The concept

As an idea for an enrichment activity to extend and develop the range of work-related skills and qualities students use, 'Producing a Digital Theatre Programme' seems to have been very successful.

- Students felt engaged and empowered: they responded positively to the importance and gravity of the play's subject; they wanted to make an impressive programme to do justice to the play.
- Making a secondary text in order to explore another text is an adaptable model. It could be used across forms and genres, and for a variety of purposes, developing the same work-related skills and qualities.
- Using digital technology rather than cut-and-paste was essential for underlining the work-related aspects of the activity, and referred to positively by almost all students in their evaluations.

The process

The theatre visit and one day workshop is possibly the shortest format that this activity could take. Because of this time constraint we had to edit the original format (see page 42) as indicated here.

- We cut out the activity looking at a range of theatre programmes, and therefore lessened the element of comparison and 'fit for purpose', not to mention the whole area of advertising.
- We involved the whole group in making one programme, instead of, say, two groups of five making two programmes, which would have allowed for comparisons to be made of the different approaches/interpretations.
- We cut out the problem-solving aspect, in which students are presented with an unforeseen problem, requiring them to introduce a new section, cut a number of pages, or overcome a copyright issue.

Nevertheless, students were still engaged with a number of key work-related roles that correspond to the essential skills and qualities required within the new specialised diplomas, becoming **independent enquirers**, **effective participators**, **team workers**, **self managers**, **creative thinkers** and **reflective learners**. For example, working in teams with people they did not know, the students discussed, negotiated and allocated tasks efficiently, managing their time effectively in order to meet their agreed deadlines in a much less structured environment than is usual in A Level teaching. At the same time they became proficient in new areas of ICT and used their oral and written communication skills in a work-related context. Student evaluations also reflected the importance of these skills and qualities: 8 out of 11 thought that **team work** and the experience of being an **effective participator** were the most valuable aspects of the workshop. The extent to which the students collectively valued a trip to the theatre and the opportunity to use ICT was also surprising - and instructive. One student summed up the the general tone of the feedback:

I enjoyed [seeing the] the play very much. I also enjoyed the group work and how each pair worked on something, then all the pairs' work comes together. It gives you a sense of achievement.

So here too is evidence of **creative thinker** and **reflective learner**, not to mention **independent enquirer** and **self-manager**.

Next time round we would certainly like to extend the time available in order to:

- engage students in researching and choosing the play we go and see
- develop a much clearer notion of the content of theatre programmes and their different purposes
- have time for each student to find at least one piece of material to go into the pool of background material to work with
- have more time for them to work using digital technology
- work in small groups on a whole programme
- make more time for comparative evaluations, developing their critical skills
- make a more explicit connection between the work they are doing and the skills and qualities they need to develop in future.

Annexes

Annex 1: Mapping activity against Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Independent enquirers					
Identify questions to answer and problems to resolve	•				
Plan and carry out research appreciating the consequences of decisions					
Explore issues events or problems from different perspectives	•				
Analyse and evaluate information judging its relevance and value					
Consider the influence of circumstances beliefs and feelings on decisions and events	•				
Support conclusions using reasoned arguments and evidence		•			

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Creative thinkers					
Generate ideas and explore possibilities	•				
Ask questions to extend their thinking		•			
Connect their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways			•		
Question their own and others' assumptions		•			
Try out alternatives or new solutions and follow ideas through			•		
Adapt ideas as circumstances change			•		

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Reflective learners					
Assess themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements					•
Set goals with success criteria for their development and work	•				•
Review progress, acting on the outcomes					•
Invite feedback and deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism	•			•	•
Evaluate experiences and learning to inform future progress					•
Communicate their learning in relevant ways for different audiences				•	

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Team workers					
Collaborate with others to work towards common goals	•	•	•	•	
Reach agreements, managing discussions to achieve results	•	•	•	•	
Adapt behaviour to suit different roles and situations		•	•	•	
Show fairness and consideration to others			•	•	
Take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution				•	
Provide constructive support and feedback to others					•

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Self-managers					
Seek out challenges or new responsibilities and show flexibility when priorities change	•		•		
Work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance		•	•	•	
Organise time and resources, prioritising actions		•	•	•	
Anticipate, take and manage risks			•		
Deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands			•	•	
Respond positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed			•		

Personal, learning and thinking skills	Study range of programmes	Select material; assign tasks	Construct programme; overcome obstacles	Presentation	Reflection
Effective participators					
Discuss issues of concern, seeking resolution where needed			•	•	
Present a persuasive case for action	•			•	
Propose practical ways forward, breaking these down into manageable steps	•				
Identify improvements that would benefit others as well as themselves					•
Try to influence others, negotiating and balancing diverse views to reach workable solutions	•	•	•		
Act as an advocate for views and beliefs that may differ from their own					

Annex 2: Student evaluation sheets

Students were asked to evaluate their learning in the project, under the heading 'Your views on what you learned and how you learned it.' They were told: 'We're keen to know your views on how this project differed from the kind of learning that takes place in your normal A Level English lessons.' Their responses are included below. Each student is allocated a different letter.

1. **Was this different from your normal ways of working in English and if so, in what ways?**
 - a. We hardly use computers in English Literature. It was a joyful experience and I learnt a lot. Watching a theatre performance was really interesting, it's easier to see how characters feel towards something than in a book where it can be quite hard to imagine.
 - b. Incorporating media into our practical work.
 - c. Yes it was. It was more interesting as it was more practical and we were able to use the computers.
 - d. Much more practical and media based. Usually we discuss and talk (analyse) - less of this, more 'hands on'.
 - e. Yes because computers were used therefore the visual aid makes it easier to work and enjoy.
 - f. Yes, we never used the computer.
 - g. More movement and more visual aids to help learn new things.
 - h. It was more hand on activity, firstly going to the theatre we got a sense of the atmosphere and saw the actors act out the play. Then it was followed up by a productive workshop that re-inforced the relevance of the context of the play.
 - i. I worked in a pair quite freely and there was less teaching.
 - j. It was different because we were taken to a theatre and then used computers to make a theatre programme.
 - k. Very different. It diversifies the subject allowing us to explore different areas and perhaps other careers.
2. **Was there anything you particularly enjoyed doing and why?**
 - a. I particularly enjoyed watching the theatre performance because I hardly go to watch theatre performances.
 - b. The actual design process of our article.
 - c. I really enjoyed watching the play and writing up the biography. It is one thing when you read the play but to actually watch it, there were some things which surprised me.
 - d. The trip to the theatre. The play was really thought-provoking and got us discussing the issues raised.
 - e. I enjoyed talking about the play and figuring out what it was about and what the role of each character was.
 - f. Watching the play. We should watch more plays as plays are meant to be seen and not read.
 - g. Going to the theatre and working on the Mac computer. I enjoyed going to the theatre and I have never used a Mac computer before.
 - h. I liked designing the cover. I found it very interesting creating the right mood and sending out a message through images, layout and colour.
 - i. I liked working on the computer, designing my own review page. This was very different from usual English Literature lessons.
 - j. I enjoyed the discussion because it made me more aware of the hidden messages of the play and was interesting to discuss.
 - k. I enjoyed the play very much. I also enjoyed the group work and how each pair worked on something then all the pairs work comes together. It gives you a sense of achievement.

3. **Was there anything you didn't enjoy doing and why?**
- The amount of time the workshop took.
 - Nothing in particular, no.
 - Nothing.
 - Nothing.
 - Using the computers. They were Mac and hard to use.
 - No.
 - No.
 - No.
 - Nothing.
 - Nothing.
 - Certainly not!

4. **Did you feel that you were developing any skills for future life? If so, can you explain what they were? Use the categories below if that's helpful.**

Future learning	Future working life	Other parts of future life
- Discussion on plays, different views of others and taking them in. - Developing a more critical view of performances and perhaps texts. - Using the PC, working in programme groups. - Interpreting text and considering plays in the context of the theatre (outside of the pages of text). - I can now sort of look at a book/play and analyse it and look at what it is trying to say, what the message it is trying to send is. - Analysing and contextualising the play. - Accurate critiquing. - Editing. - Editing using software on the computer. - Editing. - Discussions on the play. Listening to other people's views, taking it in, and then commenting on your views.	- To work as a part of a big group and working together. - Using new software, developing IT skills. - Questioning the way that people live their lives and what we can do to help. - New software used, group work & creative writing. - No comments made. - Sharing views and opinions as part of a team. - Putting together ideas and organisational skills. - Computer - Designing. - Editing using software on the computer. - Computer - Designing. - To work as part of a team and compromising with other people.	- The use of QuarkXPress may come in handy for the future. - No comments made. - Understanding things from a different point of view. - No comments made. - No comments made. - No comments made. - More empathy for other societies. - Working in a group - teamwork. - Editing using software on the computer. - Working in a group - Generally as a team and also the extra lesson on QuarkXPress may come in very handy.

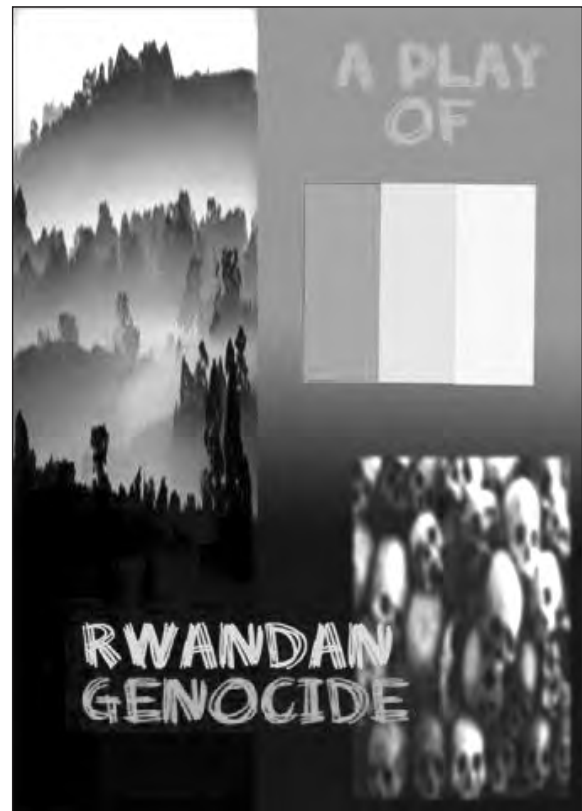
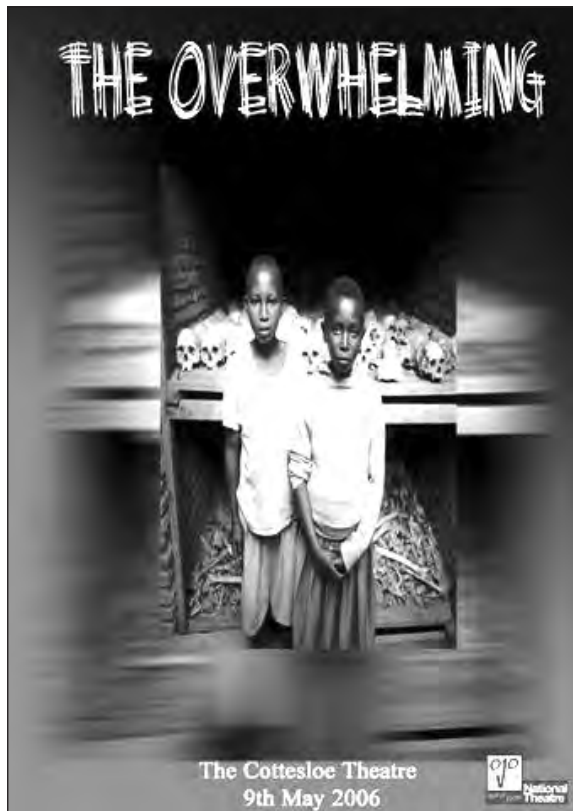
5. Pick out the one skill that you felt was most valuable in the work you did.

- a. Working in pairs and picking out each other's ideas.
- b. Becoming more critical of literature in all forms.
- c. I think that questioning the politics of a country and understanding how to help others.
- d. Reading and interpreting the text of others.
- e. Trying to find the meaning of play or other things, the message they are trying to say.
- f. Analysing and contextualising the play. Also, sharing views and opinions as part of a team.
- g. Giving my opinion of a play previously seen.
- h. Working together as a team to get the project finished.
- i. Working with another person effectively.
- j. Working in a group.
- k. Communication and group work to achieve a good piece of work.

6. What's your view on whether more learning like this should happen at A Level and why?

- a. More opportunities like this should be taken because it's a different experience and a different way of learning.
- b. I think it should. It helps you to explore different views of one particular thing, for example a text.
- c. It's brilliant to do this sort of thing. It gets individuals from different groups to work together and find they have something in common.
- d. Definitely, it broadens the idea of studying literature and is different to the standard lesson.
- e. It's a fun and enjoyable way to learn and if you like what you are doing there is more chance of you learning something.
- f. Yes, it's a more pragmatic and cognitive approach to understanding plays rather than reading books.
- g. More learning should happen like this at A Level because then you are able to associate English Literature and real life situations.
- h. Yes, I agree. I think it makes the courses more interesting and worth going to and you then can see from a first-hand perspective why certain things are added for example, staging/colour.
- i. Yes, I think it should because it is very different from the usual lesson and much more enjoyable as I was able to work more freely.
- j. Yes, makes lessons more interesting and worth going to, it broadens skills for life as well.
- k. I would strongly recommend it as it gets everybody involved doing their part and achieving something in the end.

Annex 3: Theatre programme



REVIEWS OF THE PLAY

An American academic Jack Esley (Matthew Marsh) arrives in Rwanda with his African-American wife Linda (Tanya Moodie) and 17-year-old son Geoffrey (Andrew Garfield) from an earlier marriage, to write a book based on the work of one of his oldest friends, Joseph Gasana (Jude Akuwudike), a doctor who is the director of a children's HIV clinic. But Gasana, who keeps popping up in retrospective letters he's written to Jack, is nowhere to be found. While Jack is trying to find him, Jack's wife and son are making discoveries of their own, as locals with agendas of their own behind them. All of them are chronically out of their depth. "You are seeking answers in a country you do not know, without a language to understand it," a U.N. Major advises Jack.



Part of the play's narrative skill lies in the way it leads us gradually into the scale of the mutual hatred. It establishes Jack's outsider status, the tensions between his second wife and her stepson, the circuitous fabrications of Rwandan life, before it plants its first real shock. Seeking to buy cabbages in a street market, Jack's African-American wife tries out her faltering French on a female trader. A local man comes to her aid. But the punch-line comes when he advises her not to buy cabbages from this particular woman. "She is," he warns her, "a filthy Tutsi whore."

Rogers also offers us an incremental portrait of a disintegrating Rwanda and of the impotence of those who might save it. Visiting a Bangladeshi U.N. major, Jack is informed that

pieces investigating fraught political issues. Here though, documentary-style interviews are turned into a fictional drama, with echoes of A Dry White Season. There are wooden moments, with obviously scripted speeches, but the wise-up inactivity of ambassadors and UN officials is sharply depressing while Stafford-Clark's strong ensemble (including Adura Onashile and Babou Ceesay, left) are grippingly driven

However Theatre.com comments, "But though The Overwhelming is staged with the director's defining naturalism and acted with a vibrant immediacy that pulls it into the here and now, the play is at once both too dense and fractured in its context setting and structure. There are 44 scenes in all, and they meander with good intentions, but not enough good theatre. It is too much of a history lesson and lacks an inner dramatic life to sustain what is an important story"

"We are a small dirty Band-Aid on a festering wound". And when he seeks help from a galling US embassy official, he is bluntly asked: "What would you give up to save these people, Jack?" The play is an indictment of global powerlessness in the face of the Rwandan crisis and a reminder that it may be repeated in Darfur.

Time Out gives the play a rating of 5 stars. "Director Max Stafford-Clark has managed brilliantly to evoke the murky kaleidoscopic agendas of the different players in pre-genocide Rwanda, as well as capturing the sense of terror when the division between political discussion and murder is membrane-thin"

Kate Basant from The Independent states, "The Overwhelming follows Out Of Joint's other superb verbatim

Background of Rwanda

In the spring of 1994, approximately 1 million Rwandans were murdered by their fellow countrymen, whilst the West stood back and watched.

WHO ARE HUTUS AND TUTSIS?

The terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' were first used informally to distinguish between the weatherier and poorer classes. The Tutsis (the elite) could become Hutus (the poorer workers) if they lost cattle or land, and vice versa. The Tutsis' association with power, wealth and supremacy explains some of the ingrained animosity towards them, especially as they have always been the minority (Rwanda is approximately 65% Hutus, 14% Tutsis and 1% Twa, a pygmy race who live in the forests). However, the two groups have never been culturally distinct: they share language, religion, traditions and villages.

DIVIDING THE NATION: THE HUTU/TUTSI CLASSIFICATION

The main troubles began when Belgian colonists arrived in 1918. They divided the population into the two distinct groups and began classifying every individual as either Hutu or Tutsi. Unsurprisingly, this caused resentment amongst those named as Hutu, who felt they had been permanently assigned an inferior status. In 1926, the Belgians introduced compulsory identity cards, stating each individual's ethnic group. Children inherited their father's ethnicity (in The Overwhelming Joseph's children are Tutsis because he is). Identity was no longer flexible. Under Belgian rule the Tutsis enjoyed greater

opportunities than their Hutu neighbours – homes, jobs and educational opportunities. Preferential treatment was used widely in colonial times as a concept of 'divide and rule'. As a result, the Hutus grew increasingly resentful. When the Tutsi king, Mwami Rudabanga, died in 1959, he was replaced by a Hutu king. The



Belgians now favoured the extremist Hutus who drove the Tutsis into an area called Bugesera, where water was scarce and provision was monitored. Many who were considered potential enemies were murdered, leading hundreds of thousands of Tutsis to flee to neighbouring countries to seek refuge. This was the first of many massacres, purges and attacks over the next 40 years, pushing more and more Tutsis into exile. It is estimated that by 1965, half the Rwandan Tutsi population was living outside the country. Under the extremist Hutu rule, differentiation between Hutus and Tutsis was made very clear in the classrooms and in access to all services and jobs. The Tutsi population who remained were extremely excluded in their own society. Their rights as citizens in the country were stripped to the minimum. The safety of their lives, families and homes was not guaranteed as waves of massacres took place and the inter-national community did not respond.

RWANDA IN FINANCIAL CRISIS

In 1989 Rwanda was hit hard by a drop in the market price of coffee. As coffee was one of Rwanda's main exports, this effect on the country's financial stability was severe and many were left impoverished. In fact, the whole of the Great Lakes region was affected by the economic crisis. Neighbouring countries sheltering refugees from Rwanda pressurised the Rwandan Government to take back its own people. Under this pressure and the lack-lustre economy in Rwanda, the extremist Hutu government began to prepare its people for the complete destruction of the Tutsi population, hearing the impending return of the refugees.



PREPARING FOR WARFARE

Many exiled Tutsis began forming the RPF, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which aimed to overthrow the totalitarian regime led by the extremist Hutus. This would allow Tutsis and exiled moderate Hutus to return to their homeland. In October 1990 the RPF invaded from Uganda, and after much bloodshed, a ceasefire was signed in March 1991. Two years later, in February 1993, the RPF invaded again, this time making further progress. Tension grew continually. Meanwhile in Rwanda, the Hutu army began Context: the Rwandan genocide hearing the inter-ethnic, the civilian Hutu militia which aimed to destroy Tutsi civilians and maintain Hutu rule.

3. Mini-investigations on work-related language

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Summary

The mini-project task was designed to fit into the two-week period at St. Francis Xavier Sixth Form College when AS students return from study leave and are expected to start work on the early stages of their A2 courses. Because the two weeks are disrupted by various trips and careers-related activities, it's always been a bit of a wasted period, with students and staff alike finding it tricky to get motivated enough to do meaningful work. Our plan was to make good use of the two weeks and get some work done that would lay the foundations for A2 coursework, hopefully giving the students a sense of purpose and an enjoyable group exercise that would test the skills they had developed over their AS year.



The project

The students in each of the two classes would be split into four groups of 4-5 and given a resource pack from which they could use as much or as little material as they wished. They would be asked to do the following:

- research the topic area
- select a relevant line of investigation by formulating a hypothesis or question to explore, collect and analyse relevant data of their own or from the resource pack
- find gaps in the material provided and find their own
- present their findings to the rest of the class, using PowerPoint.

The rationale for the mini-project is probably best explained by the introduction we gave out to students at the start of the assignment (on page 29).

We normally allow students completely free choice on their coursework investigations in A2, and therefore have previously introduced this unit with a more general overview of what students have done in the past, sometimes asking A2 students to come in and talk about their projects. While this has been a useful experience for all concerned, the rather open-ended approach has often led to a fairly directionless drift for weaker or less motivated students, so one of the main attractions of changing this set up was that it would allow us as teachers to mark out particular topics we wanted groups of students to explore (many of which they would probably not have considered as options).

In terms of the focus on workplace language, we wanted to ensure that a range of different work environments would be used, reflecting the different types of talk that are used in different situations. We settled on the assignments listed here.

- How adults use child-directed speech and its impact on child language acquisition.
- How teachers use language in different classroom situations.
- How interactional skills can be used in service industries (e.g. kitchens in restaurants).
- How coaches and trainers use language in sport or leisure activities.

The emphasis on spoken rather than written language was deliberate too: firstly, the AS students' previous unit was focused on conversation and interaction, so it would allow them to apply these skills; and secondly, because of our view that it is important that students develop wider 'literacy skills' which reflect the modern world. In other words we aim to give our students a chance to understand how most communication occurs these days, challenging the assumption that workplace communication is all about formal letters, producing CVs and developing a sympathetic phone manner in order to sell payment protection insurance.

On a more practical level, because we wanted to introduce the students to different forms of data collection, we wanted to have an audio-visual element to each topic area and just happened to have some recordings we thought would be interesting.

The project (information given to students)

For the next two weeks you will be working on English Language mini-investigations during all your English lessons. This mini-investigation project has a number of different aims:

- to prepare you for your A2 coursework Language Investigation by introducing you to data collection methodology
- to show you various sources of data for language analysis
- to allow you to focus on work-related language as part of a project with the English & Media Centre
- to get you to work in small groups and allocate different types of work to students with different skills and strengths
- to remind you of various linguistic frameworks before you forget them all over the summer holiday.

For the purposes of this mini-investigation project, you will be split into four groups per class and given a specific area to investigate. You will be supplied with a pack that includes a suggested reading list, some data in the form of transcripts and/or video/audio extracts and an outline of how you're expected to research, analyse and present your investigation.

Along the way, your work may be videoed as part of a project we're doing with the English & Media Centre, and you'll be asked for your views and opinions on the work you've done in a questionnaire or interview at the end of the project. As well as your normal teachers (Dan and Raj) you'll also meet Anjuli (an ex-SFX English student who's at Birmingham University studying English & Drama) and Barbara (from the English & Media Centre in Islington - they produce lots of excellent training resources for teachers and run projects on developing the English curriculum).

If you work seriously on this project, you'll gain a great deal of useful experience that will come in handy next term - you may even find a topic for your coursework - and you might find ways in which your study of English Language relates to the world of work (which is one of the reasons we're focusing on work-related language).

Resources

- Transcribed data (e.g. transcripts of conversations).
- A reading list that referred students to particular folders on the W drive, websites/blogs and a special section set up in the LRC for them to use as part of this project.
- An outline of the investigative approach.
- A two-week planning sheet.

The resources for each topic were as follows:

- **Child language:** a video extract from *House of Tiny Tearaways* and transcripts from *Child Language* text book
- **Classroom language:** a video extract of a primary school class from *Progression in Phonics* and transcripts of sixth form lessons collated by one of our A2 students last year
- **Service industries:** a video extract from Gordon Ramsey's *The F Word* and transcripts from a previous exam paper focused on language in the kitchen of a restaurant
- **Coaching and training language:** a video shot by one of the teachers in the college's fitness suite where the fitness instructor talked some students through using a machine, and an extract of a transcript from a previous exam paper.

The lessons

In each group's resource pack, timetable blanks were included, which allowed the groups to designate particular periods to particular activities, be it watching and analysing the video extracts together and making notes, doing background research in the college's LRC, collecting their own data or working on the final presentation.

The students were given free rein in terms of where they had to be at given times as long as they registered at the beginning and returned in enough time to run through what they had done with the teachers. Because we had reduced timetable commitments (i.e. no A2 classes) we could normally team teach these lessons, and with the extra support of Anjuli (one of our old students who was keen to become an English Language teacher and had come in to help out) we had high enough staffing levels to monitor what was going on with each group.



We had made a block booking of computers in the LRC in advance and placed relevant material onto the college's shared drive, as well as setting aside particular books and articles in a designated area of the LRC, in order that students had some ready-to-use resources.

The final presentations were to be around 15-minutes long and the students were advised to use PowerPoint and the classroom data projector along with any audio or visual clips they required.

Review

Each group made a successful presentation and, as teachers, we were impressed with how seriously they had taken the tasks, with all students contributing to the work of their groups.

In many cases the students had gone beyond the data we had provided them with and collected their own. One group studying the language of coaching and training had even gone back to the original coach in the video extract and interviewed him about the approaches he used with older or younger age groups, while most other groups had selected relevant areas from the video extracts and made their own transcripts to use in class.

We were very happy with the depth of analysis of the data that each group offered. Many of them would have been well placed to start their coursework investigations then and there. Even students whom we had struggled to motivate earlier in the year produced some real surprises.

From our point of view as teachers, the mini-investigation project worked well for a number of reasons outlined here.

- The deliberately tight focus on work-related language gave each group a clearly defined area to explore, thus avoiding the usual procrastination over topic choice.
- Within the topic areas there was enough freedom of choice over the angle to take/hypothesis to propose, to allow students the chance to feel they had ownership over the task.
- The topic choices linked back to previous topics studied in class and the topic areas drew on linguistic frameworks familiar to all students.
- The chance to do some purposeful work in the 2-week period motivated the students to achieve something with their time while the prospect of filmed presentations helped them to focus on the end product.
- The group work (which we don't always have as much time for under curriculum 2000) allowed the students to designate different responsibilities to each other and take control of the projects themselves.
- The emphasis on workplace language linked into the overall ethos we have of using A Level English Language to explore the real language used around us, and allowed students to relate to a range of different styles and contexts.

When some of the students were interviewed on camera after doing their presentations, similar points emerged, but one aspect that many of them seemed to especially enjoy was the teamwork element of preparing their presentations and the fact they would be presenting them to their classmates. Presentations are very much part of what we do in A Level English Language, but the emphasis on group work had its own attractions and challenges.

Doing an investigation in a group makes you feel more independent, and presenting it to the class made me feel quite authoritative and proud of what we'd done together.

Leanne



In my other lessons my focus is more heads down rather than open; it's more straight to the point, whereas in English you get to research, you have discussions about it, bring everything together and then present it to everyone.

Falisha



It's easier because we had the deadline (for the presentation) so we had to make sure we were ready. You couldn't let down the rest of the group by not bringing in your part or not talking.

Soraya

I think by doing presentations it's much more interactive than reading a book and making notes. I think people learn a lot better when they interact. It's kind of stuck in your head more because you've been able to kind of teach someone else and once you've taught them it's stuck in your head too. And I think that's a good way of learning.

Falisha



Normally when we do presentations we all do the same topic, but with this each group had a different topic so you knew you were doing yours and you'd learn about what the other groups were doing too. So I guess in that way, I found something new in everyone's presentations.

Christana

In terms of preparing them for the second year of A Levels and then university and/or working life, the responses were positive.

It gives you a little taste of what you're going to be doing for your coursework next year, except that it takes the pressure off working as a group, because next year you're on your own.



Delphine

Doing this kind of work would be useful [in future working life] because you'd need these kinds of skills to hold a meeting, to speak in front of people, articulating yourself, using a PowerPoint as part of a presentation. This kind of thing gives you more confidence.

Leanne

Because you're doing English Language you're always analysing what people say, so you think 'Oh they're using an imperative but they're trying to disguise it' and it all flows over into everyday life.

Soraya

Because you've studied conversation you know what's right to say, what's sensible to say, and you know what's appropriate as well, so I think it helps with everyday life.

Falisha

The most useful things are probably being able to talk to the class, research things and put it in such a way that the rest of the class will understand.

Christana

Students commented on the challenges presented by this type of work:

Because we were given a specific task and we didn't have any choice, we had to get more involved in the research. If it had been something that we personally had an interest in, we would have had more knowledge to include in the presentation, whereas we just had to focus and get on with this.

Soraya

We only had a week so there wasn't time to argue about it, you just had to focus and get on with it.

Falisha

We split up the work, so I analysed one transcript, she did another, someone else did the background reading and we divided it up... [if we were to change anything] I'd get involved more in what the other people were doing. Like with Rui's bit about the theories - he had a list of theories but it didn't all link in with what certain parts of the transcript had. So if we'd all done it together we could have looked at it and put theories together at the ends of our transcripts and said how it all came together.

Soraya



It was interesting thinking of all the different sports and how people talk cos I would never have thought of picking that topic to analyse.

Christana

The hardest part was being given a specific topic to do, because usually you pick a topic you enjoy. The second hardest part was being given a topic and told 'there you go'. Normally you get given a specific framework but this time you had to think of your framework, so it's more on you ... you had to think of what to look for. When you had other presentations you had a topic and a framework you could go through, whereas with this one you had to think of what you wanted to look for, if that makes sense...It was harder but it made it more interesting.

Christana

Conclusions

One of the things that was immediately clear from the early discussions about the LSN project was that A Level English Language is already ideally placed to offer students a detailed understanding of how communication can be used in a variety of contexts, including the workplace. Because the focus of A Level English Language is often on real examples of talk and the language of contemporary written texts, there is an opportunity for students to develop a detailed understanding of how we communicate and why certain styles and structures work in particular situations.

As Soraya commented when asked about how the investigation might relate to the world of work, 'Because you're doing English Language you're always analysing what people say, so you think "Oh they're using an imperative but they're trying to disguise it" and it all flows over into everyday life.' This grasp of linguistic meta language is vital to the students' progress in the A Level but also helps them relate what they have learned to the language they use everyday - in the home, with friends on the street and where they work and study - giving them an empowering and self-critical framework.

While this mini-project is similar in many respects to what we do in other units (research into child language and language change for instance) the fact that we deliberately emphasised workplace language brought certain considerations to the forefront. As Falisha pointed out rather astutely, it's not so much what people say but what they say in a certain context: 'Because you've studied conversation you know what's right to say, what's *sensible* to say, and you know what's *appropriate* as well, so I think it helps with everyday life' (my italics). And it is perhaps this element of the task that is one of the most useful for students looking to apply their skills to the wider world or work.

Given that employers don't often enter into a freeform discussion with new employees over what they want them to do but instead assign specific roles and duties to their staff, it's probably interesting too that some of the students responded positively to the challenge of working to a brief that was selected for them while relishing the chance to take their own creative approach within the confines of the brief.

Alongside this, the various skills developed and refined while producing PowerPoint presentations, working in teams and researching background theories and concepts - many of which are used on a daily basis in a whole host of subject areas - are all transferable to study in H.E. and the workplace.

Annex 1: Mini-project reading lists

Classroom discourse:

Kress, Jewitt et al: *English in Urban Classrooms*

Walsh, Steve: *Investigating Classroom Discourse*

Cockroft, Susan: *Investigating Talk*

Kitchen/service industry discourse:

Koester, Almut: *The Language of Work*

Cockroft, Susan: *Investigating Talk*

Training/coaching language:

Beard, Adrian: *The Language of Sport*

Cockroft, Susan: *Investigating Talk*

Child/carer interaction:

Crystal, David: *Listen To Your Child*

Gillen, Julia: *The Language of Children*

General background:

Goddard, Angela: *Investigating Language*

Resources at <http://englishlangsfx.blogspot.com/>

Annex 2: Carrying out your language investigation student sheets

Investigations are pieces of original research designed and carried out by you. They involve you in:

- *asking questions about language and generating hypotheses*
- *selecting appropriate frameworks for the systematic study of language*
- *analysing language data*
- *drawing conclusions in answer to the questions/evaluating the hypothesis*
- *evaluating the validity of the findings, the success of the methodology and exploring possibilities for further exploration.*

The coursework option allows you to design your task with complete freedom. You can define your own topic and must collect your own data. This therefore involves you in:

- *designing appropriate methodologies to collect and analyse data which will answer your questions or test your hypotheses*
- *collecting some original language data.*

(AQA A specification)

Structure of the investigation

Here is an outline of the parts of the investigation you need to include and what they consist of. Within each section is an extract from an A grade student's project to give you some idea of what's required and how one student went about it.

Introduction: An explanation of the focus of the investigation and the issue(s) that you think are interesting in the data provided.

I have decided to focus my language investigation on the social aspects of English Language and in particular the topic of Representation. By developing what I have learnt from the AS course I hope to explore in depth lexical asymmetry, focusing on the attitudes and context of certain words. I chose this primarily because I found the subject area extremely interesting from what was dealt with in the AS course and secondly, I feel that it is not restricted or limited in scope, which will enable me to proceed in various directions, therefore producing data that will hopefully lead to a distinct and challenging conclusion...

Aims: Broad details of what you are seeking to find out.

Hypothesis: A statement (not a question!) that describes what you are expecting to find out.

Background reading: A summary and discussion of the relevant research and theories for the topic selected (e.g. a summary of research into male and female conversation, that might include a discussion of Robin Lakoff's views on women's use of tag questions, Janet Holmes' different findings about facilitative tags used by women, along with a wider discussion of deficit, dominance and difference models).

An aspect of Representation in English Language concerns sex and gender; sex is biological while gender is constructed by society. For example, it is a convention of society that from birth, the colour blue is associated with boys and likewise, the colour pink is linked to girls. As language is a product of human society, these notions of masculinity and femininity, among others, start from birth and are reflected in everyday colloquial language...

According to Muriel Schulz, it is not sheer coincidence that there are more positive words for males in language, nor is it unintentional that there were so many negative words for females with no semantic equivalent for males e.g. 'bitch'. Schulz referred to the rule that words, which are marked for females, which begin to be used in association with females, become somewhat pejorated e.g. slag. The word slag originally referred to a product of smelting yet has become known to describe sexually promiscuous women in a derogative manner. This is known as the semantic derogation of women...

Methodology: A description of the approach you are using to collect your data and any problems you envisage along the way. You need to show some awareness of research methodology (ideas like qualitative research, quantitative research, longitudinal studies, ethical considerations, validity & variables will probably need to be explored).

The use of a questionnaire to my investigation is beneficial as the responses will be gathered in an identical format, allowing them to be not only more objective compared to interviews where the participant and interviewer can stray from the main objective but comprehensive when analysing data. The information will be relatively quick to collect and, as a fair amount of data can be generated, it should ensure a valid conclusion. I intend all the questionnaires to be personally delivered and collected, ensuring that I will get maximum level of responses...

Data description: A brief overview of the data, perhaps tabulating survey results or statistics that have been collected.

Analysis: A systematic study of the language use being studied in order to fulfil the aims.

The female titles 'Mistress,' 'Queen' and 'Lady,' (titles that form lexical asymmetrical pairs with the aforementioned titles) are actually viewed similarly by men and women. Both men and women view the term 'mistress,' negatively, possibly due to the sexual connotations. The term 'lady' however is associated by the majority of females and males neutrally, which may be due to the fact that the term is not excessively used so has been held in little esteem by both. The same can be said for 'Queen' (although the majority was +1 Positive). This could be the result of the evolving change in attitudes, causing the previous research carried out by Stanley and Schulz to be out-of-date...

Conclusions: A clear statement of what has been discovered in response to the aims.

Evaluation: An evaluation of the validity of the conclusions and any further investigation that might be carried out in the light of the discoveries made.

Overall, I think the investigation has been partially successful, in that I was able to carry out an in depth analysis of data due to the responses generated. In terms of methodology, if no misinterpretations of questions have occurred than I make the general assumption that there was no false answers. However, in the case that it did happen, there may well be discrepancies hidden in the data presented...

Section 3 Schemes of Work

This section offers outline schemes of work for possible assignments with a work-related focus.

1. Organising a poetry event – Barbara Bleiman

Outline

This activity could be a substantial project, involving students in organising every stage of an event at their school or college. Alternatively it could be scaled down, so that students take on some elements of the planning. A 'bare minimum' approach might involve students in reading a range of poetry and making presentations to argue for a choice of poet for the event.

It could be closely tied into students' A Level studies (based on a modern set text poet), or seen as a form of broadening and enrichment, based on wider reading of contemporary poetry. It could focus on their own writing of poetry (a poetry slam for instance). It could be an activity to bridge the gap between AS and A2, undertaken at the end of the summer term after AS exams or it could be part of preparation for UCAS applications or H.E. interviews, giving students something very specific and special to talk about.

The version below is based on the idea of broadening and encouraging students' interest in contemporary poetry.

Stage 1

Provide students with a book box of contemporary anthologies, ideally drawn from a list of poets who go into schools (for a list of suggestions see the resources section at the end). Ask students to read widely in small groups and come up with a suggestion for a poet to invite in to take part in a poetry event at the school. Each group could be given three or four different anthologies to choose from. If you want to include performance poets, you could give students a website address for a performance poet and expect them to find out the kind of information that would allow them to make a judgement about the poet (for instance, making contact with the poet by email to ask for a few sample poems). Alternatively you could do this preliminary work yourself.

Stage 2

Each group does a presentation on its chosen poet, arguing in favour of inviting that poet into the school/college. The presentation might include something biographical, a reading of a selected poem and anything else they might want to include from researching what that poet might be like to listen to live (e.g. reviews from the Internet and so on). The more persuasive the better!

Stage 3

The class votes on one to three poets to approach (depending on how ambitious the event is going to be), with a couple of reserves, in case the first choice poets refuse the invitation.

Stage 4

The students work out what needs to be done in order to plan the event. For example:

- identifying possible dates, agreeing them with the Headteacher, caretaker and other relevant people
- deciding on a room; ticketing and pricing

- the shape of the event (readings? questions and answers? time for students to read their own poetry? time allocations? the length of the event overall? start time? finish time?)
- publicity
- financial management/budget, applying for funding if this is relevant
- contact with poets - invitations, arrangements, sending details, confirmation letters and so on
- selling tickets
- producing a programme
- refreshments
- videoing the event and editing it
- responsibilities on the day.

The students could be supported to a larger or lesser extent. For instance, they could be expected to generate a list such as the one above, or the teacher could provide one for them.

Students need to agree a way of handling all of the tasks - for instance, by allocating different aspects to pairs or individuals, agreeing a way of keeping track of the different jobs to be done and working out an overall diary of deadlines. The teacher could build in a time to report on progress each lesson.

Stage 5

On the day, students have allocated roles, depending on the nature of the event, for example: welcoming poets; acting as hosts for the show; collecting tickets; thanking the poets; videoing the event; writing letters of thanks to the poets.

Stage 6

A final meeting to reflect back on the event - how it went, how they would do it differently in future. Students reflect on the skills they have learned, both in terms of what they've found out about the contemporary poetry scene, the poets themselves and in terms of the work, life and personal skills they have developed in planning the event.

An additional element might be feedback from adults they have worked with, reflecting on the skills they have learned and encouraging them to think about their transferability.

Skills and knowledge developed in this activity:

- broadening awareness of a variety of contemporary texts and authors
- learning about poetry as part of a book industry: agents, publishers, poetry readings and so on
- skimming, scanning, selecting information for re-presentation to a specific audience
- researching a topic, within a specified time-frame and with a particular end-product in mind, using both book and Internet resources
- presenting ideas orally
- writing letters and emails, making phone calls to get things done
- working as a team and negotiating over decision-making to organise an event
- problem-solving to resolve difficulties as they arise.

Roles students will have experienced (from PLTS framework):

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Effective participators

Useful contacts and resources for this activity

1. Apples and Snakes: <http://www.applesandsnakes.org/education.php>
Apples and Snakes is an excellent first port of call, with an extensive listing of poets who do workshops and readings, including many performance poets. Their education pages also give very helpful advice and contact numbers if you want to apply for funding for your event. If you want to include some younger performance poets in your possible selection for students, you might be able to contact them in advance, explain what you're doing and get hold of some sample poems, or self-published collections. Apples and Snakes are able to give you good advice about poets who go down well with A Level audiences.
2. Booktrust: www.booktrust.org.uk
Booktrust have an excellent downloadable pack, giving advice on how to invite poets into schools. This might be something that students could download for themselves.
3. The Poetry Society: www.poetrysociety.org.uk
You can email the education department for advice at: education@poetrysociety.org.uk
4. National Association of Writers in Education: www.nawe.co.uk
5. Artscape: <http://www.artscape.org.uk/search.php>
A searchable list of artists of all kinds, with a brief biography, links to individual websites and contact details.

2. Producing a theatre programme – Barbara Bleiman

Scenario

A theatre is putting on a new production of the set text play. A team in the Press and Publicity Department has been given the task of putting together the programme for the production.

Stage 1

Students look at a range of theatre programmes, to get a sense of what kind of material is often included and analyse what's essential, what's useful, what makes it a particularly good read, or results in a rather uninspiring programme.

Stage 2

Students are expected to put together some initial ideas to present to the director and/or manager of the theatre. (This could be simulated, with a teacher acting in role, or it could be a real meeting with a theatre professional, where possible. Some regional theatres have active education departments who might be willing to facilitate this kind of activity.) At a meeting the students discuss their ideas and come up with a firm plan for what should go into the programme.

Stage 3

Students collect resources and/or sift through resources provided by the teacher, within a tight timescale, to select the most useful material for the programme. (The teacher might explicitly teach skills of selection, highlighting and organisation of material, perhaps by modelling an example before students get started. One way might be to look at a critical text and model for students how to use the index and contents pages, skim-read and select relevant material.)

Stage 4

Students share the task of planning and writing the programme, editing it and preparing it for publication. They use the Internet to find out who to contact over copyright and permissions and draft a letter to them.

Stage 5

A problem arises. For instance:

- at the last minute the director decides that he/she wants an extra section on something else. Students have to respond to this in a very short space of time, possibly doing their own original research.
- at the last minute the director decides to cut the number of pages. Students have to decide what will be cut.
- permission is refused to reprint one of the articles/an extract - something new has to be put in its place.
- an extra half page or quarter page advert comes in and students have to edit and cut the copy to free up the correct amount of space.

Stage 6

There could be an element in the scenario where the Director/Manager sees several initial 'mock-ups' and makes a choice of the one they want to use for the Programme itself.

Stage 7

Students reflect on the skills they have learned, in terms of their knowledge of the text, the critical debates and contextual information they have gathered, and in terms of the development of the work/life/personal skills they have developed in doing the assignment.

Additional possibilities

Someone from a local theatre could come in to set the project off or respond to the students work.

Someone involved in programme production/Press and Publicity at a bigger theatre (such as The Globe, The Royal National, the RSC, Bristol Old Vic, Liverpool Everyman) could be asked to come and talk about the process, show examples of programmes and talk about their working life, how they got into that job etc.

Possible sections in the programme

- Cast list
- Character outlines
- Plot summary
- Contextual information about the play
- Contextual information about the playwright
- Short quotations from critics
- An article about viewing the play in a modern context
- An article with Director's notes on decisions about the staging the play
- Snippets of actors talking about their roles
- Visual images of the production in the past and now
- A look at changing attitudes to the play over time
- The director talking about why this is an important play to re-stage

Skills and knowledge developed in this activity

- Reading (skim reading and close reading) of critical and contextual material on a set text
- Adapting material for a particular audience (including considering issues of copyright, acknowledgement of sources and plagiarism)
- Selecting material
- Presenting ideas orally in a meeting
- Developing knowledge of the text and of the ways in which secondary material might enhance a playgoer's understanding of the text
- Viewing a drama text as a piece of theatre, rather than just a text on the page
- Researching a topic, within a specified time frame and with a particular end-product in mind
- Working as a team and negotiating over decision-making
- Using material creatively to plan and write about a text

Roles students will have experienced (from PLTS framework)

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Effective participators

3. Selling fiction assignment – Jane Leggett

Scenario

A group from the marketing department of a publishing company has been given the job of improving sales, especially amongst their well-known author titles. They identify between three and five novels by well-known authors on bestseller lists and decide to research their selling profiles. Based on the outcomes of their research they present proposals to the executive committee for improving their own company. They will have about 20 minutes.

Stage 1

Students look at a range of bestseller lists and begin the process of identifying a long list of about 10 titles. They research the books on Amazon to check price (nothing above an agreed price) and ensure a variety of genres are included - for example, thriller, romance, science fiction, adventure. They agree their list.

Stage 2

Students prepare a resume of their task to email to the UK companies who publish the books, along with a list of questions they wish to ask. They contact the publishing companies and attempt to book an appointment for a phone interview with an employee, if possible, in three to five days.

Their success at this stage will determine how the rest of the assignment is organised. For example, if the companies co-operate then they can use and interpret the data they get. If they do not then they will have to identify and research different selling outlets themselves. They will have to solve this problem for themselves. Success or failure could be part of the learning process. However, teachers might want to do some initial groundwork to ensure that it is viable.

Stage 3

Within a tight timescale, students buy copies of the three to five novels they wish to research and read at least one each. They write a review of the novel they have read and use the Internet to supplement their review. The review should also include their own views on the key target audience and suitable selling outlets, and justifications for these views. These are circulated amongst group members and considered.

Stage 4

Students carry out interviews and begin researching the selling outlets. (See list on page 45.) They collect material and begin to organise it. (The teacher might explicitly teach skills of selection, highlighting and organisation of material, modelling an example before students get started.)

Stage 5

Students begin planning and negotiating their proposals and presentation.

Stage 6 - The unexpected (opportunities for problem sharing)

A problem arises, for example:

- at the last minute the director decides that s/he wishes students to address the publishing company's annual national conference and expects a PowerPoint presentation. It's in four days time.
- at the last minute the director decides to cut the amount of time available to 12 minutes. Students have to decide what's going to go. The presentation is tomorrow.
- there is no longer time to address the executive committee in person and the director now requires a written report between 800 and 1,200 words. It can be illustrated. The meeting is in four days.

Stage 7

Students reflect on the skills they have learned, both in terms of their knowledge of the texts, the critical debates and information they have gathered, and in terms of the development of the work/life/personal/thinking/learning skills they have developed in doing the assignment.

Possible selling outlets:

- Internet
- Supermarket
- Chain outlet (W.H Smiths, John Lewis)
- Large book chain
- Independent bookstore
- Corner/High Street shop
- Free giveaway deals with magazines
- Mail order (e.g. The Book People)
- Audio books (e.g. Talking Books)
- Audio downloads (e.g. www.audible.co.uk)
- School book clubs

Skills and knowledge developed in this activity:

- Reading (skim reading and close reading) of fiction, critical and contextual material
- Selecting material
- Presenting ideas orally
- Developing knowledge of a variety of texts and literary genres
- Researching a topic, within a specified time frame and with a particular end-product in mind
- Working as a team and negotiating over decision-making
- Using material creatively to plan and write about texts
- Problem-solving to overcome barriers as they arise

Roles students will have experienced (from PLTS framework):

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Effective participators

4. Working in the theatre: a simulation on *The Rover* – Jane Waghorn

Scenario

A group of 8-10 young people form a theatre company and decide to produce *The Rover*, a Restoration play (students need to be familiar with the play in order to benefit from this work-related workshop but much of the work could be easily adapted for use with any playscript). There is an artistic director, a stage manager/producer, a costume designer, a casting director and the body of actors who will perform. In the simulation, they have negotiated with the Barbican Centre in London, and have secured a venue they are familiar with - The Pit. They have a run of one week (five performances) with scheduled rehearsal time during the previous two weeks.

Stage 1

The students choose the roles they will adopt (director, costume designer, actor etc.). Their task is to become familiar with the practical and artistic considerations that putting on a piece of theatre entails. To start this process they research their job titles to better understand the demands of the role. They research the nature of Restoration Comedy and the possibilities and restrictions of The Pit as a theatre. The actual casting of actors is not done at this stage.

Stage 2

The students make short presentations with notes and illustrations, share their findings and establish that, in role as the theatre company, they need a series of pre-production meetings where they make decisions about the production as a whole through close attention to particular scenes. Here the teacher may need to guide them so that the added value of using work-related learning to deepen literary analysis is maximised. They start with Act 3, Scene V, a scene which informs the tone and style of the performance, as the focus for their first production meeting. In role, students agree a way of working and record the following:

- How the scene will be set (informed by a general idea of how the whole play is going to be set) and what they hope to communicate through its design. **Development activity:** A plan of the set for this scene could be drawn up, preferably using real data about the size and shape of The Pit.
- The costume designer decides what the characters are going to wear in line with the company's decision to be historically accurate or deliberately move away from this.
Development activity: Sketching and annotating designs.
- The casting director collaborates with the artistic director in deciding from their pool of actors who is going to take on the lead roles. They need to be able to justify their choices through a consideration of the demands of the parts.
Development activity: A series of acting notes could be written up for rehearsal use.
- The stage manager needs to collaborate with the director and actors to understand *how* the scene will be played.
Development activity 1: S/he could produce a prompt copy of the scene plotting actors' moves, and any lighting/sound requirements and where particular props are to be used.
Development activity 2: The stage manager could decide, with one or two other members of the company who their target audience is, the outline of the cost of the project, fundraising possibilities, cost of tickets, poster design, publicity strategy etc.).
- The actors, along with the director, need to make decisions about how they are going to play the scene; use their voices, deliver lines, use the space etc.
Development activity: The actors and director rehearse the scene with the actors going on to learn their parts ready for a presentation or recording of some kind. The director could produce a set of notes for this scene in readiness for future rehearsals.

Stage 3

The students share the task of presenting all the decisions they have made in their first production meeting. They then decide how they might use the two-week preparation/rehearsal time to make sure the production is a success. They draw up a rehearsal schedule covering the whole play, which accommodates technical requirements too.

Stage 4 - The unexpected (opportunities for problem sharing)

A problem arises. For example:

- at the last minute the manager of The Pit decides that the length of the performance is too long and that a significant editing job needs to be done to shorten the over-all running time
- at the last minute the manager of The Pit calls to say the venue is no longer available. The company can only book a local school hall that has a traditional proscenium stage. The staging has to be adapted.

Stage 5

Students reflect on the skills they have learned, both in terms of their understanding of the play, the critical debates and contextual information they have gathered, and in terms of the work, life and personal skills they have developed in doing the assignment.

Additional possibilities

Links could be made with local theatres, young theatre companies, actors, and directors and so on for feedback, support, and discussion of their work life and the extent to which the skills developed in the simulation reflect those required in the real world.

Skills and knowledge developed in this activity:

- Taking on the roles of theatre professionals
- Understanding how a drama text comes to life as a piece of theatre and using this to learn more about the text
- Through research, learning more about critical and other contexts for the play
- Presenting ideas orally
- Researching a topic, within a specified time-frame and with a particular end-product in mind
- Working as a team and negotiating over decision-making
- Using material creatively to plan work around texts
- Problem-solving to overcome barriers as they arise

Roles students will have experienced (from PLTS framework):

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Effective participators

Annex 1: Familiarising students with the play

With any drama text, it's important to support students in becoming very familiar with the text through textual analysis, group readings and in a variety of drama-based activities which highlight the fact that playwrights write scripts to be performed. Below is a list of activities that help students to understand dramatic techniques a playwright has employed and to grasp the role played by the audience, the playwright, the director, the costume designer and so on.

- Hotseating a character, the playwright or the director of a production.
- Role-play - consideration of themes and issues.
- Using the bare bones (essential lines) from each scene to make up a version of the whole play.
- Freeze-frames - significant moments in a given scene or act.
- Creating different acting spaces depending on the setting of the scenes - then working out the proxemics (positioning of actors in relation to each other) within those spaces. Communicate the meaning behind the text, non-verbally.
- Tension timelines. Constructing a time-line to show pace and crises in the play (large sugar paper + thick pens).
- Question and answer matching. Extracting the questions from an act and the answers. Mount on card separately and give out randomly. Students have to find each other and consider the significance of both.
- Visual presentations of plot, character, mood, costumes etc.
- Sequencing sections of the text (a speech or a scene) - small groups working out the order based on reading cut up, random sections to each other.
- Devising actions or sounds to precede the first lines of the opening scene or a new act if appropriate.
- Group soliloquies - allowing for the dramatic dimension of delivery. Each student is given a very short bit of the speech to memorise and then deliver in sequence in a variety of ways, for example whispering, shouting, angrily etc.
- Practising the effects of Pause, Emphasis and Tone. Consider the tempo of different speeches.
- Using movements and gestures, extract the essentials from a given Act in terms of plot, character and theme and produce a 5-minute dumb show.
- Plan and draw a setting - make use of research if this is a substantial activity.
- Choosing music to go with a particular scene. Looking at how music and songs are used as a dramatic technique, for example in Act 1 the music and dancing set the carnival atmosphere in Naples. In Act 2 Antonio's love song to Angellica cleverly underlines one of the darker themes of the play despite being accompanied by a lute, conventionally a signifier for love rather than lust.

Students should approach the study of a play as if they were going to direct a performance. See *Hamlet - A Workshop Approach* by Brenda Pinder and Ken Watson (2002).

They should ask themselves at all times the questions listed here.

- What is the performance space? (Context of the time)
- What is the relationship between stage and audience?
- What is the setting?
- What time of day is it?
- Who enters?
- What do they say?
- What do they do?
- Who has the focus?
- Where are characters in relation to others on stage?
- What are they wearing?
- What props do they use?
- What is the tempo of the scene?
- When do characters exit?

The answer to these questions, together with the more familiar literary criticism issues (language, themes and so on) will develop an understanding of the drama techniques employed by the playwright, and the thinking required to make informed decisions whilst working within a theatre company in no matter what capacity.

Annex 2: Activities to help students with this simulation

- Researching the historical period of the Restoration
- Researching the conventions of Restoration Comedy
- Researching the role of women in the seventeenth century
- Researching the life and work of Aphra Behn

Section 4

Work-related learning and A Level English

1. A list of ideas for work-related English Literature assignments

1. Explore the publishing history of one of the set texts - a modern novel text or a contemporary poetry text:
 - visit the publishing company
 - a visit from the publisher
 - research in *The Bookseller*, the Internet and so on
 - visit from a local writer going through the process of getting published.
2. Find out about literary institutions, organisations, publications and groups, for example The Poetry Society, The Poetry Library, *TLS*, *emagazine*, *The English Review*, The British Council Literature Section and so on. Make use of at least one of these in an early assignment and share what's been discovered and how useful it is.
3. Do a comparative analysis of the two magazines published specifically for English A Level students: *emagazine* and *The English Review*. Use this analysis to help influence which one should be ordered by the school/college. Write an email to the editors offering constructive feedback on the magazines.
4. Readers and reading - research into what the class reads and why; looking at the issue of the Internet versus the printed page; come up with booklists, recommended reads and so on for the intranet; set up a school/college book group; create a 'reading tree'. Students could set up an intranet page for English, which they take responsibility for updating at regular intervals.
5. Book Prizes - students could shadow the judging of: the Man Booker; the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry; *Richard and Judy*. They could set up their own school/college version of *Richard and Judy*.
6. Exploit fully the possibilities for role-play/drama within texts and around texts, both to develop students' confidence in speech and group work, and introduce practices and insights from the world of theatre.
7. Booksellers and book sales - track one of the set texts and how it sells, how much it sells, how it's marketed by the local bookstore; invite in someone from Waterstones, Borders or another bookstore to talk about marketing, sales, book covers and so on.
8. As a class, make an arrangement to do a display for a local library on one of the set texts, or for the school/college library.
9. Go into other tutor groups/classes to 'sell' a set text book to them, or sell reading poetry to them.
10. Investigate all the radio book programmes (Open Book, A Good Read, Radio 4 Book Club and so on). Rate them. Create your own radio programme on a topic to do with books.
11. Organise a session in English on the careers that English graduates go into, or English in H.E.; invite in an H.E. lecturer to participate in a lesson and then compare it with English as taught in H.E.

12. Put on a rehearsed presentation of selected parts of a play text, or a production. Identify key moments, learn them and stage them. This could involve organising notices, costumes, tickets, negotiating over rooms, times and so on.
13. Organise a Poetry Slam/poetry reading; invite contemporary poets, to read their own poetry. Students organise some or all of the event.
14. Produce a magazine - perhaps making connections with other subjects eg. Literature and Politics
15. Explore ideas about the canon, popular texts in relation to set texts - unpick the assumptions behind the texts that are chosen for study.
16. Do Work Experience/work shadowing placements in literature-related organisations.
17. Do a simulation, in which students have to make a case for one of the following:
 - one of three set texts to be chosen by the publishers for a major re-launch
 - one of three texts to be chosen for a new Channel 4 mini-series
 - putting forward 3 different ideas for an adaptation.
18. Organise a trip to the theatre - research what's on, decide what to go to, make the booking, organise the transport, write the review.
19. Organise a trip to a book reading, a book shop, a literary festival.
20. Do a simulation that involves students in having to grapple with lots of 'secondary' material, such as criticism, contextual material and so on and learn how to: skim; select; reshape for a new audience and purpose; re-write without plagiarism and so on. One example might be creating a programme for a theatre production.

2. A list of ideas for work-related English Language assignments

1. Do presentations using PowerPoint - to others in same class, or to a different audience altogether, on various aspects of language (e.g. a presentation to a local business on political correctness in the workplace).
2. Write material on language-related topics for the school intranet/website.
3. Prepare and teach a lesson for younger students on an aspect of language, such as accents and dialects, slang, language change. Students plan the lesson, reflect on the needs of their audience, prepare resources and evaluate these afterwards.
4. Produce a leaflet on a topic such as child language acquisition (for trainee nursery nurses), talking to your child (for new parents), language in a counselling situation (for school peer support group).
5. Interview or job-shadow a former student who has entered a relevant career, for example journalism, speech therapy, PR, media work.
6. Write and illustrate a children's book, and investigate the processes involved in publishing and marketing children's books.
7. Produce a radio broadcast, short film or website on an aspect of language.
8. Do mini-investigations, as a way of teaching the skills of research required for a bigger project/ investigation.
9. Make more explicit the work-related relevance of exploring language in the AQA B topic 'Language and Occupations'. Introduce some real work elements, such as mini-investigations based on students' part-time jobs, or work experience placements.
10. Use 'reality TV' programmes such as *The Apprentice*, *Dragon's Den* and so on to explore aspects of the language of work such as jargon and specialist language, transactional and relational workplace genres of talk, politeness principles and so on.

Section 5 Appendices

Appendix 1: Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)

Independent enquirers		
Identify questions to answer and problems to resolve		
Plan and carry out research appreciating the consequences of decisions		
Explore issues events or problems from different perspectives		
Analyse and evaluate information judging its relevance and value		
Consider the influence of circumstances beliefs and feelings on decisions and events		
Support conclusions using reasoned arguments and evidence		

Effective participators		
Discuss issues of concern, seeking resolution where needed		
Present a persuasive case for action		
Propose practical ways forward, breaking these down into manageable steps		
Identify improvements that would benefit others as well as themselves		
Try to influence others, negotiating and balancing diverse views to reach workable solutions		

Team workers		
Collaborate with others to work towards common goals		
Reach agreements, managing discussions to achieve results		
Adapt behaviour to suit different roles and situations		
Show fairness and consideration to others		
Take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and their contribution		
Provide constructive support and feedback to others		

Self-managers		
Seek out challenges or new responsibilities and show flexibility when priorities change		
Work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance		
Organise time and resources, prioritising actions		
Anticipate, take and manage risks		
Deal with competing pressures, including personal and work-related demands		
Respond positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed		

Creative thinkers		
Generate ideas and explore possibilities		
Ask questions to extend their thinking		
Connect their own and others' ideas and experiences in inventive ways		
Question their own and others' assumptions		
Try out alternatives or new solutions and follow ideas through		
Adapt ideas as circumstances change		

Reflective learners		
Assess themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements		
Set goals with success criteria for their development and work		
Review progress, acting on the outcomes		
Invite feedback and deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism		
Evaluate experiences and learning to inform future progress		
Communicate their learning in relevant ways for different audiences		

Appendix 2: QCA Functional Skills

Generic definition

Functional skills are those core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.

Individuals of whatever age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment, as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work.

English

- Each individual is confident and capable when using the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and is able to communicate effectively, adapting to a range of audiences and contexts.
- This will include being able to explain information clearly and succinctly in speech and writing, expressing a point of view reasonably and persuasively and using ICT to communicate effectively.
- In life and work each individual will be able to read and understand information and instructions, then use this understanding to act appropriately and to analyse how ideas and information are presented, evaluating their usefulness, for example in solving a problem.
- They will be able to make an oral presentation or report, contribute to discussions and use speech to work collaboratively in teams to agree actions and conclusions.

Mathematics

- Each individual has sufficient understanding of a range of mathematical concepts and is able to know how and when to use them.
- For example, they will have the confidence and capability to use maths to solve problems embedded in increasingly complex settings and to use a range of tools, including ICT as appropriate.
- In life and work, each individual will develop the analytical and reasoning skills to draw conclusions, justify how they are reached and identify errors or inconsistencies. They will also be able to validate and interpret results, to judge the limits of their validity and use them effectively and efficiently.

ICT

- Each individual is confident and capable when using ICT systems and tools to meet a variety of needs in a range of contexts. For example they will use ICT to find, select and bring together relevant information and use ICT to develop, interpret and exchange information, for a purpose.
- In life and work each individual will be able to apply ICT safely to enhance their learning and the quality of their work.

(QCA website)

Appendix 3: Work-related learning and English in HE

The English Subject Centre for Higher Education has commissioned several studies in this broad area, including: studies of employability and English degrees; studies of what skills are involved in an English degree and how they match the skills seen as desirable by employers; degree assessments that include contact with the world of work. (For more details see www.english.heacademy.ac.uk)

The work matching the skills undertaken by English graduates to the skills needed in working life provides a very useful context for considering the same issues at A Level. One project led by Deborah Cartmell, Principal Lecturer in the Department of English at De Montfort University, did a longitudinal survey of English graduates in work, from 1998-2001, from five universities, to explore what skills they had developed in their English degrees that they found useful within the workplace. It looked both at how graduates perceived the subject in terms of employability as well as employers' perspectives. The skills that the graduates found most useful were advanced literary and communication skills, writing for project-based work, independent thought and judgement and time-management. In terms of assessment, graduates felt that the use of the essay as the sole basis for assessment was regrettable and lamented the limited opportunities for group work and presentations. Both employers and graduates were found to be insufficiently aware of the value of their degree in the workplace.

The case study below was funded by the H.E. English Subject Centre as part of its ongoing research into work-related learning and first presented at the Teaching Scottish and Irish Literature Conference (University of Manchester, October 2005). It follows a model similar to the A Level examples in Section 3 of this publication and suggests comparable thinking at both levels.

English Subject Centre for Higher Education Case Study

Theatre Programming as a Problem-Based Assessment for use in Teaching Scottish/Irish Drama

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Summary

The case study looks at the use of a theatre programming exercise as both an assessment tool and a technique for exploring the contemporaneity of play-texts, working on 20th-Century Irish Theatre with a mixed Level 2 group coming from different educational and ethnic backgrounds.

In writing up this technique I have drawn on experience gained working with students in both Scotland and Lancashire. I readily acknowledge their contribution to the development of the work, what I have learnt from them and from the generous input of many industry sources.

Background/context

Before I came down to Lancashire to head up the Department of Performing Arts at Edge Hill, I worked at Queen Margaret's in Edinburgh in the Drama Department. I was the Programme Leader for the Drama & Theatre Arts degree and the Subject Leader for what was then the first named specialism in Literary Management in the UK.

As part of training my fourth year Literary Management students I was in contact with Michelle Volansky, then Literary Manager and Dramaturg for Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, and Michelle asked my students to suggest some contemporary Scottish plays for Steppenwolf. This entailed extensive research into the client theatre and the selection of a series of plays we felt would meet Steppenwolf's needs and also make a particular statement about Scotland and what we felt was important about the contemporary Scottish stage. Students had to analyse the artistic and economic issues underpinning Steppenwolf's work, but crucially had to construct an analysis of the potential cumulative impact of their choices.

Programming in the broader classroom context

Programming is only one of the many tasks that Literary Managers become involved in; its application to a broader range of teaching started to emerge recently while teaching a Level 2 module on 20th-Century Irish Theatre. One recent group of learners included drama students from Ulster, the North West and the rest of the UK. 50% of the group were US study abroad students, none of whom were Drama majors, but most of whom claimed Irish ancestry. Around half of the Merseyside students saw themselves as Scouse first, but Irish came a close second. Therefore the group comprised native and diaspora learners and others.

Some of the most challenging ideas for students to get to grips with, particularly non-theatre majors, are around the cultural significance of a particular text or type of theatre - the ability to assess its contemporaneity - does it, in the Quaker phrase, 'speak to our condition'? This is particularly the case with theatre that claims for itself insight into issues of national identity, where non-specialists encounter a quagmire of cultural cross-currents.

Two particular areas of challenge presented themselves early on to this Irish Theatre class.

- The non-theatre majors found it hard initially to get past a purely literary response to the play-texts, to see them as pre-texts for performance and as both products and cultural artefacts - for consumption and ownership.
- There was a marked divergence between the views of Ireland and Irish history identified within the work by the diaspora and native learners, whilst those without Irish roots (including a couple of Scots who took to sniping from the Celtic sidelines) initially tended to step back from the discussion as somehow being disenfranchised in the argument.

I had planned a programming exercise as an alternative final assessment to practical performance work; however, as I introduced them early on to the principles behind programming and together we modelled a 'season' for Liverpool Playhouse, the impact of the exercise on their understanding of the subject as a whole became clearer.

When considering programming, the ideologies underpinning the work of particular companies or theatres, particularly those with a 'mission statement' to represent something of their nation's character and culture, are placed in their pragmatic context - a process that sometimes reveals more of the idealism at the heart of the work, and sometimes shines a spotlight on practice that falls short of lofty aspiration. At the other end of the spectrum, the unspoken cultural assumptions underpinning decisions made apparently on purely commercial terms are laid bare.

Having learnt to examine a theatre's artistic choices with an eye that acknowledged many of the other constraints/goals to one choice or another, it then became much easier to project the model onto other times and places - the emergence of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the significance of its choice of plays, became easier to place within a historical and cultural context; the work of Field Day came into sharper focus when examined in a light that also illuminated the other commercial work around at the time.

A particularly interesting development was in students' sensitivity to the varying themes, imagery, mini-myths and narrative structures being employed by playwrights, directors, designers et al, for example, in relation to the issue of emigration and the emigrant - two particularly useful works to look at here are Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come* and David Grieg's *The Speculator* - which I consider to be a much underrated play. The students visited Bolton's Octagon Theatre to see an Irish play in performance and their fine stage-setting for Martin McDonough's *Beauty Queen of Leenane* provided a practical example of the use of visual imagery as cultural shorthand. Issues of language and translation also became topics of hot debate (see Friel's *Translations*).

...the presentation of history - the idea of history - became a live issue and provided an opening into discussion of post-colonialism as a positive force, bringing on new voices and re-discovered histories, and a cultural cul-de-sac, enforcing new stereotypes in its turn.

The assessment

The module as a whole had two assessments, the first comprising a conventional essay. The second task offered a choice of assessments of which the Programming Exercise was one. The use of varieties of Problem Based Learning, Enquiry Based Learning or Problem Based Assessment is comparatively common within the Performing Arts; however, it is used less within text-based modules. The exercise of programming for a specific theatre entails the placement of works together within a 'real-life' situation that demands an engagement with the multiple and cumulative meanings contained within the texts. This enables students to work from their own initial standpoint ultimately to place their individual stamp on the final product.

- Native learners could re-assess the audience reception of work about their country and confront some of the expectations of others about their choices.
- Diaspora learners were confronted with the often unspoken assumptions underpinning their consumption of a diaspora version of the native culture.
- Non-native learners were given knowledge and able to demonstrate skills that gave legitimacy to their opinions within the group.

In the majority of cases, pairs of students undertook this task.

Assessment 2: 50% group presentation - In 15-20 minutes present a theatre board with a proposal for a season of Irish theatre. You must take account of the theatre's profile and pay particular attention to the issue of contemporaneity. PowerPoint or OHP available. Choose from one of the profiles below.

- A medium scale repertory theatre in a southern English city - 1 main house 650 seats, 2 studios 200 seats apiece. They've recently done *The Importance of Being Earnest* on mainstage and two year's ago *Krapp's Last Tape* in the Studio. 60% of their revenue comes from subscriptions. There isn't another repertory for 50 miles around.
- A small arts centre in Liverpool - five years old. 250 seats in a multi-purpose venue, there's a café/art gallery open throughout the day and into the evenings. Except for the pantomime, they're not a producing house. They've never done an Irish play.
- A medium scale arts centre attached to a university in Wales or Scotland. There is a 500-seat auditorium which is a receiving house and a 150-seat studio theatre, used by community groups and for small-scale touring. There is an art-gallery and café/bar, opening onto a sizeable foyer space. There is a separate theatre bar open in the evenings. The student theatre group are very attached to doing Beckett.
- A medium sized League of Resident Theatres theatre in New York State (650-seat mainstage, 300-seat studio). It is largely dependent on subscription funding. There is a sizeable Irish-American community in the vicinity, but they are not generally regular theatregoers.
- Steppenwolf in Chicago. Go to their website for details.
- Your choice of Theatre, to be agreed with the tutor.

In the event I hardly needed have created the fictional mini-biographies, because every group chose to work on an existing theatre and/or company. The real companies undoubtedly provided them with potential for a

great deal more research and information on which to base their work; however, the mini-biographies acted as prompts to the types of conditions/information they should be seeking to engage with, for example, recent repertoire or day-time catering. Most students chose to include a PowerPoint display in their presentation.

In Assessment, the class played the roles of the Theatre Board and could ask questions of the team after their initial presentation. The Board could subsequently give their opinion of the extent to which the presentation convinced them; however, they were not directly involved in the grading. Their feedback was passed on to the students. I would have allowed students I had previously trained in peer assessment to contribute directly to the grading of the work.

In the four to six weeks they may be working on this task it is possible to present students with unexpected variables to their scenario, for example, part way through their work, a playwright's agent calls to refuse them the performing rights for a particular play - is it key to the cohesion of their season? If so, what can be done to replace it? Almost more difficult: the theatre receives additional funding for one production in conjunction with a particular event (for example St. Patrick's Day) - what should this money be spent on and why? Do you spend it on a schools' project, do you use it to bring a celebrated Irish actor to your theatre - who and in what role? (For UK-based students in this class, the attraction was James Nesbitt, who was being offered a lot of work this way, whilst two US students aimed to bring John Malkovich back to Steppenwolf to direct *Waiting for Godot*.)

The peripheral elements (special events, ticketing deals, corporate sponsorship, funding opportunities) provide variety and interest, scope for imagination and ingenuity, particularly for non-theatre majors; however, the core of the task is selecting a group of three to five play texts, seeing them both individually and in concert as saying something about Irish theatre and nation.

I have provided a skeleton list of items for consideration and research when programming at the end of this paper.

When it came to the assessment itself, the diaspora students, both UK and US, displayed a real sensitivity to a range of issues around the representation of Irish theatre by, with and for diaspora audiences.

- * Two students from Liverpool with travelling connections, constructed a season for the Playhouse which culminated in a community production of *Once a Catholic* to involve the Irish Travelling Community and utilising specialist EU funding aimed at supporting cultural work with travelling communities.
- * A US student from upstate New York, a business major, analysed the theatre-going habits of the Irish American community around her home and developed a well-balanced season designed to tempt more of them to become regular theatregoers, mixing challenging choices with more 'comfortable' pieces, providing foyer concerts, talks and exhibitions - bracketing the productions in ticketing deals and underpinning the season with links to local school/college curricula.
- * Two Scottish drama students decided to do a comparison of the challenges of programming Irish plays for the Tron in Glasgow, and for PICT (Pittsburg Irish and Classical Theatre) whose Artistic Director, when approached by them for comment, was candid about the levels of comfortable expectation his season ticket holders, key to his economic planning, had of his Irish programming choices. These students developed a cunning plan to feature two PICT-favourite comic actors, firstly in Lynch's *The History of the Troubles (According to my Da)* and subsequently in grittier, but still witty, roles as a bridge to more challenging repertoire for audience members who already knew their work. Their declared aim was to get O'Rowe's *Howie the Rookie* onto the PICT season.

In the eventuality, they didn't score as highly as they might have done, not really having got to grips with the political and cultural connections between Glasgow and Ulster, thrown up by their choice of work for the Tron and, whilst at first sight perfectly sound, their PICT strategy was undermined by the actors in question being rather too old for the O'Rowe piece for which energised and dangerous youth is a requirement. The students had become so caught up in their overall plan that they'd neglected the necessary fundamental engagement with the play-texts.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, this assessment task proved suitable to a much wider variety of students than it had first been intended for and the opportunities for the development of transferable skills it provided were particularly useful in opening up the subject to non subject specialists and providing students from a wide variety of backgrounds with a meeting place for mutually supportive and collaborative work. [For the student of literature, the exercise of programming plays for a theatre could translate into programming speakers for a Literary Festival.]

Some fundamental points about programming

In order to undertake the assessment task the students must research not just suitable plays, but the cultural and economic frameworks within which those texts will sit - taking due note of the limited availability of some commercially sensitive information.

- Who does your theatre serve? (Audience demographics, catchment area.)
- How do they aim to serve them? (Mission statement.)
- How successful are they at what they do? (Profile from previous 5-10 years of operation - commercial confidentiality, financial profile - sources of funding, sponsorship, size of subscription income, the competition - other theatres, their size and proximity, profile.)
- Resources available - numbers of auditoria, size, flexibility, personnel (artistic director, designer, resident company, outreach team - youth, TIE company - their tastes and successes), production budgets (estimated on previous years' productions), peripheral services (café/restaurant, gallery space).
- Programming profile: What is the pattern to their year - for example, is there a Christmas show? Are there slots devoted to works with guaranteed schools and college curriculum tie-in? Do they do new work? If so, where and at what time? Do they already do Irish/Scottish theatre? If so, what plays and how often? How did the theatre promote them - tone of press releases? Were they well received?
- What are your ambitions for the season? New theatre? A range of work? Financial security? Within the comfort zone for the subscribers' tastes? Pushing at the edges of that zone - developing those tastes? Bringing in new audiences - where from? Are there special events that could provide tie-ins? Marketing - what is the 'hook' for your season? Anniversary of Playwright X's death, play Y premiered at this theatre 50 years ago - is this an artistic hook or a marketing hook?
- How do your plays fit together? In commercial terms/in artistic terms? What do they say, intentionally or subconsciously, about Ireland, its people, their hopes/fears/ambitions? Do they reinforce stereotypes or refute them? Are they consciously seeking to 'voice the nation'? As an exercise consider the Edinburgh International Festival's drama commissioning choices for 2005 - looking at the multi-cultural nature of twenty-first century Scotland. Special ticketing deals, a good example to look at here is the 2005 Edinburgh Festival Synge Cycle deal - had novelty (first time all plays together), timing (advertised as a 'long-held artistic commitment' on the part of the

director), opportunity (festival goes more likely to commit to whole cycle/combination of pieces), variety (mix of well-known and lesser-known pieces, full-length and one act), celebrity (influential canon playwright, 'hot' company).

- Are you going to need to 'explain' them through platform events, etc.? Are they likely to prove controversial?

All the information gleaned from the above feeds into the questions below:

Programming - the basic questions you need to ask yourself

1. What is your theatre like? Size, number of auditoria, technical facilities, peripheral spaces (restaurant, art gallery), community/educational involvement (Youth Theatre), audience demographics, ticketing policies, funding structure, surrounding community make-up?
2. Has your theatre done this type of work before? If so, when? How well was it received (by critics, at the box-office)? Is there a spin-off to be had here, for example, latest play by a popular playwright? Re-appearance by popular actor/s in similar roles. If you're planning a themed season, is there a 'hook'?
3. What is the competition like in the vicinity? What Irish theatre might they have done recently and how was that received?
4. Why are you thinking of doing this type of work now? Is there a significant date/anniversary at hand? Has there been community demand?
5. What are the artistic imperatives behind your choices? Is this work an ambition/particular enthusiasm of the artistic director, theatre board, leading actors?
6. What influences your choice of pieces within a typical season - what is the mix? Classics (on the school curriculum), new writing (specialist funding, smaller venue? mission statement), solid commercial successes (age according to venue - smaller the venue the longer it takes hits to filter down to them). Which pieces are 'bankers', which are 'builders' - aiming to develop the audience base as well as to provide a good night out for the existing clientele? Which pieces will scare the living daylights out of your subscription ticket holders - and do they constitute a significant percentage of your income? Are they amenable to being 'stretched'?
7. The economics - what will it cost to stage? Size of cast? Guest artists or resident company or amateur such as Youth Theatre? Settings, costume design, production values? Can you get sponsorship, commercial tie-ins?
8. Where can you place the work to best effect within the artistic year? Are you going to risk 'bunching' works or is it best to spread them out?
9. What is the whole package you can work around this?

An artist's agent is obliged to seek the best deal for their client. If you're a small venue seeking to produce a very recent hit play, particularly if there are larger producing houses within a certain radius, you'll likely be refused if the agent feels they can get their client a larger fee from a larger venue. It's like performing rights only gradually being released for amateur performance. On the other hand hosting a try-out before a West-End transfer, or co-producing with other houses far enough away to pool resources but not deplete either's audience base, can boost both the resources available for any given production and the overall reputation of the venue/company.

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Appendix 4: A Level specifications with work-related potential

This project focused predominantly on existing A Level courses in the three Englishes. However, for teachers teaching Media Studies, Communication or Performing Arts there is already a great deal of scope for exploring work-related learning, drawing on experience in pre-vocational and vocational education at Level 3 and in Higher Education. In this appendix, Ian Duckett (LSN) outlines courses in Media: Communication and Production and Performing Arts and offers some suggestions for approaches to them and support for in-service training.

Appendix 4A: GCE in Media: Communication and Production

The GCE in Media: Communication and Production is aimed at those students who wish to develop media production skills in order to prepare for work in the media industry or a related sector, or continue to study media production at a Higher Education institution. There is no specified medium or industrial sector and it is entirely up to the centre to decide the technical skills which learners will be taught and the media industry context of the programme they provide.

There are three compulsory units at AS level. Unit 1 covers industries, texts and audiences which takes in the structure of media industries and the ways in which the structures and the intended audiences affect what is produced. Students consider how audiences make sense of media products. Unit 2 covers skills for media production which covers both research and technical skills. These two units are internally assessed. Unit three is an externally set, internally marked and externally moderated unit which comprises a Media production brief. The brief is provided by the Awarding Body and students produce a media product. Learners are expected to demonstrate an understanding of and ability to apply, appropriate pre-production, production and post-production knowledge and skills.

There are also three compulsory units at A2 level. In Unit 4 - research and development for media production - learners need to originate an idea for a media product, for which they carry out research and development work. They then have to pitch the idea to their teacher/s to gain permission to take the idea to production. This unit is internally assessed, primarily on the 'pitch' process.

Unit 5 - Media production project - is where learners take the idea they have researched and developed in Unit 4 into production. This is an internally assessed unit.

In Unit 6 - Professional practice in media industries - learners work to an externally set brief to consider their Unit 5 production in the context of professional practice. They have to consider professional and legal constraints and how these have affected their work; consider their work in the light of past and current professional practice in the same genre and form and reflect on their production management and the quality of their product. This unit is externally set, internally marked and externally moderated.

Assessment criteria and guidance are provided for all units and marking is compensatory, so learners do not need to get a mark for every assessment criterion in order to achieve a unit, nor do they need to pass every unit to achieve an overall pass at AS or Advanced Level.

The qualification provides a broad introduction to the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the needs of the media sector, so it is essential that any programme of study is grounded in relevant professional working practices and national occupational standards. Those planning, teaching and assessing the course should be familiar with the sector. All teaching and assessment of technical and production skills should be set in work-related contexts.

To achieve this, centres must ensure that learners have substantial exposure to people who have up-to-date knowledge and experience of the relevant sector, whether this be through the teaching team or through

regular visits to and from people working in the sector. Learners must have opportunities to gain relevant work experience and develop contact with employers who have an interest in education and training in the sector.

Building vocational activities into a programme for a GCE in Media involves careful planning and needs to incorporate active teaching and learning strategies that link with the world of work. Activities such as working in small production teams; encouraging students to help one another and to 'trade' time and skills when working on individual productions; visits to work places and research assignments in which learners have to investigate local companies and current production work.

There are a number of organisations that can help teachers to develop links with local employers in the sector, such as Careers Services; Chambers of Commerce; The Connexions Service; Education Business Partnerships; Learning and Skills Councils; Local Education Authorities. The course will include tips on writing for the media as well as the different kinds of writing such as to inform; to persuade; instruct/advise and to entertain.

Appendix 4B: GCE in Performing Arts

The GCE in Performing Arts is aimed at those students who wish to develop performance skills in order to prepare for work in the performing arts sector or related areas, or continue to study performing arts at a Higher Education institution. There is no specified medium or industrial sector and it is entirely up to the centre to decide the technical skills which learners will be taught and the media industry context of the programme they provide.

Assessment criteria and guidance are provided for all units of study and marking is compensatory, so learners do not need to get a mark for every assessment criterion in order to achieve a unit, nor do they need to pass every unit to achieve an overall pass at AS or Advanced Level.

The qualification provides a broad introduction to the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the needs of the performing arts industry, so it is essential that any programme of study is grounded in relevant professional working practices and national occupational standards in this case, performance. Those planning, teaching and assessing the course should be familiar with the sector. All teaching and assessment of technical and production skills should be set in work-related contexts.

To achieve this, centres must ensure that learners have substantial exposure to people who have up-to-date knowledge and experience of the relevant sector, whether this be through the teaching team or through regular visits to and from people working in the sector.

Learners must have opportunities to gain relevant work experience and develop contact with theatres and other employers who have an interest in education and training in the sector.

Building vocational activities into a programme for a GCE performing arts course involves careful planning and needs to incorporate active teaching and learning strategies that link with the world of work. This should include activities such as working in small production teams; encouraging students to help one another and to 'trade' time and skills when working on individual productions; visits to work places and research assignments in which learners have to investigate local companies and current performance work.

There are a number of organisations that can help teachers to develop links with local employers in the sector, such as Careers Services; Chambers of Commerce; The Connexions Service; Education Business Partnerships; Learning and Skills Councils; Local Education Authorities.

Ian Duckett, Development Adviser, Vocational Learning, LSN

LSN's Vocational Learning Support Programmes (VLSP) offer in-house training in 'Media: Communication and Production' and 'Performing Arts' to staff involved with the delivery of applied A levels. Support is offered in all vocational subjects as well as generic topics such as Curriculum Planning, Teaching & Learning and resource development. In-House Consultancy comprises a free tailor-made in-house support service for teachers and managers in secondary and further education, for the planning and delivery of the applied A Levels. Consultants arrange visits to facilitate workshops or discuss everything from setting up new courses to improving quality.

Applications should be made in the first instance by e-mail to Abisola Amoo at vlsp16-19training@lsneducation.org.uk or phone 020 7297 2523. Alternatively application forms can be downloaded from www.vocationallearning.org.uk