

RESOURCE PACK



GAME OVER

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**COMMUNITY
FUND**





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Introduction to Game Over by Mark Wheeler

Game Over began with Fiona Spargo-Mabbs, mother of Dan, (from my 2016 Methuen play *I Love You Mum, I Promise I Won't Die*) and a Facebook post she made when she visited 10 Downing Street. Fiona was delivering a letter on behalf of the PSHE Association to campaign for statutory PSHE in schools. Alongside her were two mothers; Sasha Langton-Gilkes who lost her son to a brain tumour and Breck's mum, Lorin. I had seen nothing of Breck's story in the media despite wide coverage. As soon as I saw Fiona's post I looked it up and remember thinking... "I'd love to write a play about that!"

I spoke to Fiona, and she revealed Lorin had asked her about *I Love You Mum* and had expressed interest in a play telling Breck's story. Fiona put us in contact but, given that I had just retired from running a youth theatre group I warned Lorin that it would need to be commissioned and a performance group found.

Cut to October 2017 and out of the blue I receive an email from Zoë Shepherd, Assistant Headteacher, at Beaumont School, in St Albans, Hertfordshire

Dear Mark

*We have just been awarded Artsmark Platinum and are keen to keep driving things forward. We have been looking for a play suitable for our Year 9 Drama Company to perform that explores LGBT+ issues. Anything we read doesn't seem to be what we need. As we were discussing it, I said it would be great if there was a Mark Wheeler play (we study **Missing Dan Nolan** as our OCR GCSE set text). Is there anything in the pipeline or is this something you would be interested in exploring with our school if we could find funding for a commission?*

Zoë

Here's another coincidence! Two months previously, I had agreed to dramatise a transgender story. Contracts were being sorted and funding was, I was told, being sorted. Contracts were drawn up and I had signed my side of them. I didn't want to write two similar plays so; I explained the situation and cheekily offered up the possibility of Breck's story. (The transgender play never happened, as the commissioning school gave up on the fund-raising – it's not easy).

Meanwhile, Beaumont jumped at the idea of using Breck's story and made a successful bid to the National Lottery Community Fund for the project ... writing and production. Things happened fast! Lynsey Wallace, Head of Drama at Beaumont and responsible for organising the bid was incredibly pro-active giving me total confidence in her ability to make this whole project work. The bid was granted in August 2018.



Between September and October, various permissions were sought, contracts signed and, throughout October, I conducted the interviews. Those with Lorin and the triplets were conducted in their home in three segments across about six hours. I spent the afternoon with Lorin alone, who told me everything up until the Spanish holiday. The triplets arrived home from school and told their version of the whole story, with Lorin chipping in. It had been unclear whether they would be willing to talk so it was such a relief that they did.

Their version of events, reflecting on an incident that happened when they were in Year 7 from the vantage point of now being in Year 12 was fascinating and hugely emotive (as you will see when you read the play). Some aspects of what they said (for example looking at information about the murder online) had never been discussed in front of their mum. I felt honoured to be a part of this open exchange. Normally I interview “subjects” separately. This group interview was full of interaction, which proved helpful for the scripting of the play.

Lorin concluded the day’s interviews by her telling me the dreadful details of the murder and her reaction to it. She must have been exhausted! I had a long drive home to process it all and knew (as if I didn’t before) I had an incredible and important tale to tell. I couldn’t wait to start the transcription process and did... the very next day!

Ollie and Matt (real names) offered their stories on behalf of Breck’s friends. I conducted their interviews by phone... poor Ollie had to deal with my limited IT skills when I managed to wipe the recording as soon as he was off the phone. He generously gave me a second interview... and recorded that at the other end of the phone just in case!

Finally, I interviewed Barry, Breck’s dad in his workplace. I was fascinated by his attitude to LD and, he requested that I make an effort to include this in the play. I knew how the verbatim genre would allow for this very easily.

I blitzed the transcription of all the interviews.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| • Lorin | 25556 |
| • Triplets and Lorin | 8915 |
| • Matt | 7536 |
| • Ollie | 4313 (shorter possibly because it was a second take) |
| • Barry | 8376 |

Total 54,696 words

There were a few other documents relating to Lewis Daynes’ emails and the secret recording to add to the total, but they amounted to around 500 words.



I had to reduce these 55,000(approx.) words to a play I was contracted to deliver at about 8,000. It transpired to be just over 12,000. I wanted to tell the story with the detail I felt it deserved. With no particular (word) target in mind, I edited each interview to leave what I felt might prove useful for the play.

I knew where I wanted it to begin. The triplets had talked about their thoughts on moving house and the way their schools had reacted to such a painful situation. I remember, during their interview, thinking, it should begin with these “normal” events being launched into this horrifying context. I went with my gut-feeling and pasted their words from this part of the edited interview to form the main body of this section and then edited them a little. I didn’t need to add anyone else’s accounts, because no one referred to these moments because they weren’t there! Simple.

With the remainder of the play, I used the chronology of the story and took whoever said the main details of the story as the backbone and, introduced other accounts to it where they added a different perspective.

As an afterthought, I decided to use the transcript (edited) of Lewis Daynes’ call, reporting the murder, as a prologue to the play. It is the most horrifying start to any of my plays and lets the audience know instantly where the unstoppable story is heading. I intercut the phone call with commentary from Breck’s parents, offering a key moment for Barry to highlight his views I mentioned earlier.

One other idea I had while interviewing Lorin was to divide her role into multiple Lorins. I remember her saying:

I don’t feel whole; missing parts and can’t function properly. Torn apart.

As she said this, I had the idea of dividing her part into six. This would have the advantages of:

- her being able to talk/fight with herself
- illustrating how Breck might have felt (and certainly how LD perceived her to be), surrounding him with her opinions, love and frustration and
- preventing one character hogging the stage with long monologues that may lack movement.

I made “Lorin” (without a number) the original Lorin prior to LD splitting her apart. With his arrival in her world, the other Lorins start to appear, becoming become increasingly concerned... even paranoid about the situation as the number allocated to the character increases.



I am aware that directors may wish to re-allocate these numbers (as is happening in Beaumont Schools premiere production, where Lorin 5 & 6 have limited lines) and I am totally happy about that. Directors must make it work for them but they must interact with each other and Breck/LD and not become standing narrators.

This concept of the “torn apart Lorin” will become the iconic feature of this play. I can’t wait to see the different ways it is interpreted.

I am aware that some have suggested this story may be too shocking to share. The word “safeguarding” has been proffered to defend this view. I don’t agree and fear young people are in danger of being safeguarded to an extreme where they are denied the opportunity to witness the warnings this story offers. The TV film, *Gail is Dead* (still available on YouTube) shocked me into never messing with drugs. Shock tactics don’t work with everyone... but for many they are do. I am one.

A drama teacher recently contacted me about another of my plays. She said, before purchasing a set of scripts (which she felt were a crucial tool), she had to speak to her Child Protection Officer to get permission to use the script. My reply to her was:

“Arguably, there are more child protection issues by avoiding these topics than there are by arming young people with the knowledge that comes from true stories such as these.”

The play gives a clear idea of what effect it has had on Lorin, her family and Breck’s friends. Their passion to speak out about the appalling situation they were hurled into emphasises how we should make every effort to tell/hear these stories and learn from them. Had Lorin’s complaint about LD’s grooming behaviour been followed up properly, Breck would still be alive.

I hope you will join me in using *Game Over* to help to convey the **Breck Foundation’s** message as far and wide as possible. I am excited to see how this play can both generate outstanding and imaginative drama and help to empower young people to make safer choices for themselves online.



Mark Wheeler



Verbatim Theatre

Definition:

Verbatim theatre is a form of documented theatre in which plays are constructed from the precise words spoken by people interviewed about a particular event or topic.

Actualisation:

A verbatim (word-for-word) style of theatre uses documented words from interviewees or records, such as court transcripts, to construct the play. Verbatim theatre exists as conceived in the United Kingdom. But in the United States, verbatim theatre is not always distinguished from the broader genre of documentary theatre.

Origins:

The first documented piece of fact based drama can be traced back to Phrynichus' production of *The Capture of Miletus* in 492 BC. Contemporary documentary drama started in Eastern Europe with troupes called The Blue Blouses staging current news items through theatre and song in the USSR so that the news could reach the mostly illiterate population. Concurrently, in Germany, Erwin Piscator was using theatre to present purely factual material. His 1925 piece, *In Spite of Everything*, is seen as the beginning of contemporary documentary drama. The first pieces of verbatim theatre were created by Anna Deavere Smith in the early 1990s.

Famous verbatim productions:

- *Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith (1992)
- *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* by Anna Deavere Smith (1994)
- *Talking to Terrorists* by Robin Soans (2005)
- *My Name is Rachel Corrie* by Katherine Viner and Alan Rickman (2005)
- *London Road* by Alecky Blythe and Adam Cork (2011)

Creating verbatim theatre:

The challenge of verbatim pieces are to ensure that they do remain as pieces of theatre. They could end up as very static, so practitioners have incorporated music, dance and physical theatre to ensure they remain interesting as well as focussing on production elements such as lighting, sound and projections to bring the stories to life.



Scene Overview

Section 1: 999 Call

This scene begins with a stage direction that plays with innocent childhood games that develop into the world of gaming. LD is introduced into this sequence and connects with Breck through a symbolic prop (controller). The opening is a chance to use ensemble in a physical sequence. It moved on to the original phone call between LD and the Operator. The mood of the scene is cold, intimidating.

Section 2: Life after Murder

Chloe, Carly, Sebastian and Lorin remember the period of time after they had found out about Breck. It is them, set today, talking about what they remember, how they moved and why. There is a brief moment of 'friends' dialogue, where ensemble can be used. The mood is lighter. Barry is heard in a monologue at the end of the scene. A powerful voice giving an interesting and thought-provoking opinion.

Section 3: Early Days

Lorin, Carly, Chloe and Barry speak of their memories from life before the murder. Context given on the family and who Breck was, in their eyes. The scene dips in and out of flashbacks with Breck. We are introduced to Matt, a friend of Breck and the last line introduces LD. The mood is happy, light. We understand more of the family dynamic and background.

Section 4: Suspicions

All of the Lorin's are introduced in this scene, and LD, friends of Breck and the siblings towards the end of the scene. The Lorin's work as a voice of the conscience, alongside pushing the scene along. LD is seen as being fun. The scene gives context as to how LD built relationships with the friends and Lorin; how his lies and excuses were seen as being 'odd', but how nothing was really suspected; how he started to favour Breck. Part way through the scene the tone starts to change as Breck's 'personality changed'. The siblings enter and build on this. Becoming quite tense by the end of the scene. Lots of context on grooming in this scene.

Section 5: Isolated

Siblings, Lorin's, friends, LD, Barry feature in the scene. The family become suspicious, the friends are isolated from Breck, LD demonstrates his manipulative and darker side to his personality. Flashback is included as we go in and out of memories. Further facts on the events leading up to the murder are spoken of. Context on Police and actions the family took to support Breck and prevent harm.

Section 6: Driven Underground

A flashback discussion with Breck, Barry and Lorin on their 'intervention' meeting. The scene shows how Breck, by now, had been manipulated by LD.

Section 7: Plans

LD monologue of messages sent to Breck, setting up his plan. LD recites an Amazon shopping list, interjected by Lorin's happy memories of Breck packing for his school trip to Spain. Texts are used as dialogue. The scene is a total contrast of happy memories from Lorin and Barry, against LD's plan. We see Breck arrive at LD's flat. Further text dialogue between Barry/LD/Breck. Context of the event (facts and timeline), use of mobile communication, social context between parent/child.

Section 8: Murder

A lightness to the start of the scene as Lorin's open the dialogue on her birthday. Split with family and friends at home going through the timeline of events on the day they received the news of Breck. Lorin hears of the news. The scene continues to flow through the family's journey after hearing – police, hospital, funeral. The scene grows atmospherically across these moments from light to dark.

In court we meet LD, Lorin and Barry. The detail of the murder is revealed, through short chunks of LD interjected by Lorin or Barry.

Final moment is with Breck and Lorin. The voice she wishes to hear.





Lesson Plans

Section 1: 999 Call

Pre-reading text discussions/exercises – *Do not share the subject of the play!*

- **Activity 1**
Play old school - traditional games – eg ‘What’s the time Mr Wolf?’, stuck in the mud, tag, rock, paper, scissors etc
Split the class so each half ‘watch’ the other half playing games? What do they notice?
- **Activity 2**
Small groups – scribe a discussion – each is a short, timed task (use an online timer)
Q: Why do we play games? Why do we like games? Compile a list of favourite offline games
Q: What about online games? Why do we like them? Compile a list of favourite online games
Q: Will children in the future ever play ‘real’ games?
- **Activity 3**
Whole class question and discussion:
What is different about these two types of games?
How safe do we feel playing each type of game?
- **Activity 4**
Play emergency siren FX:
(Class are all sitting on floor in own space)
What emotions do you feel? (eg fear, panic, excitement maybe?)
What expectations do you have if this is the opening of a play?
Try and store responses to these exercises somehow (maybe using iPad? Post-it notes? Teams?) and explain these are all rehearsal methods – ways of lifting text from page to stage/exploring the text in rehearsal
- **Activity 5**
Moving pictures: Create a montage scene of children playing games – try the scene in mime, try in still pictures, try in slow motion, try rewinding the scene, try stopping and re-starting the scene.



Now place one character in middle of the montage
What effect does this have on audience watching?
Rehearse and share with rest of the class – perhaps give each group a focus:
Create a sense of excitement / a sense of fear/ a sense of unease -adapt montage to suit focus?

Text work

- **Activity 1:**

Blind reading of text activity.

In Pairs: split the text up so **A ONLY has Operator text** and **B ONLY has LD** (knowing only that A and B alternate!)

As are in one room/part of room (on phones)

Bs are in other room/part of room (on phones)

Run the scene so that B calls A, then A begins with 'Essex Police and Emergency...

After the students have tried the text from cold – share the fact that this is real – how do they feel about it now? Tell students that Breck was killed by someone he met online: an online Gamer. Perhaps share news reports or basic facts relating to the case.

- **Activity 2:**

Verbatim Theatre: Share explanation of this style of theatre – make sure students understand this

Second Reading of text in rehearsal (Director's intentions)

Now the students know the 'text' is real -how might they approach staging it? How do they feel about it? What impact does its 'truthfulness' have? Think about the effect they want to create with each character and how they might achieve that. Perhaps store ideas for vocal and physical ideas for performance in portfolios?

- **Activity 3:**

Role on the Wall. Write words to describe each character in this exchange (LD and Operator).

Experiment with vocal and physical skills to explore character ideas

- **Activity 4:**

Inner thoughts task focusing on the Operator. Play the scene with two operators – one voicing thoughts at key points – perhaps 3 or 5 moments

- **Activity 5:**

In role writing task as the Operator. While music or soundtrack is playing students in role as Operator at the end of the shift. Each student is given one of 3 in role writing tasks:

A: Just a list of words to describe their reaction to this call (er)

B: Write diary entry for that day describing that call

C: Official report of the shift

NB: the type of music/track will probably affect the type of writing?





Section 2: Life after Murder

- **Activity 1:**
Off text improvisations: Use an event from the weekend – something you did – boring or exciting
A&B: talking AT each other as fast as possible – relay the details of the event as you remember it

A: Relay the details of the event again to B
B: stop and ask questions to check the details

B: Relay details of the event
A: ask questions as if you are...a reporter, a close friend, a parent
- **Activity 2**
One at a time –justify (explain) the event and how you behaved. Each student tries sharing their story/event as if answering the question:

‘Tell me, what happened?’
- **Activity 3**
Tableaux - Split class into small groups: Chloe, Carly, Sebastian
How did the triplets react to the murder? Each group create a series of tableaux focusing on key moments from the section. Attach text to each tableau, or name each as an event, eg ‘assembly’, ‘home’, ‘cards’. Use the tableaux to share your thoughts about each character’s reactions
- **Activity 4**
Improvisation – Reasons and reactions: Chloe discovers their home is for sale. Improvise the scene with her and Lorin. Make sure you share each character’s thought process.
- **Activity 5**
Improvisation- Postcards from holiday: Improvise a scene showing the family playing on the beach, holidaying together. Now make it a mime. Now turn it into still pictures – as if holiday pics. Now create some text - each family member writes a postcard to go alongside the tableau.

Section 3: Early Days

• Activity 1

Guide the class through **practical annotation** of the scene – using different colours to highlight/annotate each focus question. First, read the scene together out loud as a class and then separately in groups. Initial thoughts/questions:

What does this scene make you feel?

What do you feel about the characters?

Where does the atmosphere/mood change? Describe this change?

What pictures/events do you remember after reading the scene out loud?

• Activity 2

Give groups a line/section each delivered by a single character. Explore:

Recreate the moment described by lifting it as a scene

Recreate the moment described as a series of still pictures

Recreate the moment as a series of single words to describe atmosphere

Recreate the moment as is Breck is narrating instead

• Activity 3

Set up a scene using students sitting on chairs with headphones to represent the screens and headsets– recreate the idea of communicating online – try and create the idea of an online game/chat





Section 4: Suspicions

- **Activity 1**
Tableaux. In groups create tableaux showing the key moments from this scene. One character must come to life in each tableaux, in character, to explain why this is a key moment.
- **Activity 2**
Hotseating. Try to find out in more depth what made Lorin suspicious of LD immediately. Question Breck about how he is feeling at this point in the play. Why is he so interested in LD – what is the appeal? What does he think of his Mum's concerns?
- **Activity 3**
Status levels. In groups, each student takes a character from this scene and they line up in order of status level. Each character must explain why they are in the place that they are with a clear example from the text.
- **Activity 4**
Off text improvisation. Dinner time with all five of them. Lorin is trying to get Breck to engage in a discussion about a family holiday in the summer. Breck refuses to take part and it escalates into a row. How do the triplets cope in this situation?
- **Activity 5**
Emotion memory. Everybody write on post its things that they have strongly disagreed about with their parents. Stick up on the board and look at the board as a whole. Lying on the floor teacher talking through a hypothetical situation and the emotions that occur when you disagreed with your parents. In small groups rehearse from page 15: Breck: "Lewis says I don't drink, I don't smoke..." to page 16: LD: "...She can't even pay her bills."
- **Activity 6**
Brook's non-verbal language. Work from page 16, Lorin: "I struggled to get Breck to come in when I needed him..." to page 17, Lorin: "It was a sort of brainwashing." Remove the dialogue and create the scene using only gestures, facial expressions, movement and sound. Then rehearse the section again adding the words back in and see what effect this has on the scene.
- **Activity 7**
Conscience alley. The class makes two lines, one side is Lorin and the other side is LD. Students take it in turns to walk down the conscience alley listening to both sides trying to make Breck believe that they are right about the other one. Each Breck decides at the end which side was more persuasive and why.

- **Activity 8**

Forum theatre. Do an open rehearsal in groups. Anyone in the audience can stop the action at any point and give advice to Lorin or Breck to try and improve the outcome of the scene.



Section 5: Isolated

- Activity 1**
 Off text improvisation showing what happened at the friends' house at Thanksgiving.
- Activity 2**
 Physical theatre piece to music showing the movement of the boys between servers and LD being in control of them all. Use levels to show changes in status as people fall in and out of LD's favour.
- Activity 3**
 In pairs, write the manifesto that LD wrote for Breck. Perform in pairs using puppetry and choral speaking.
- Activity 4**
 Off text improvisation. Role play what happens in the police station after Lorin makes the call to the police explaining her suspicions about LD.





Section 6 - Driven Underground

- **Activity 1**
The Intervention - using role play to explore the conversation had between parents of the 2 families and children.
- **Activity 2**
In role writing - taking on the role of Breck, explore how Breck really feels during the intervention discussion. What is really going on in his mind as the adults are talking? What do you think he really thinks about what they are saying?
- **Activity 3**
To further this - can you embed the in role writing as a monologue into the role play between parents and children.
- **Activity 4**
Using over, under, through - explore using this physical exploration to pass the envelope with the phone in it. How can this become a symbolic sequence between Lorin and Breck?
- **Activity 5**
Joe's parents - create a choral speech that explores how they may have felt and why they didn't contact Lorin and Barry when they found Joe back on the server with LD on Boxing Day. Develop this to include synchronised movement with the speech.
- **Activity 6**
Taking the section from Matt 'After Christmas...' through to the end of the scene, create a split scene in 2 sections (the friends, LD), using the actor playing Breck to link them, developing the content of the discussions from the 3 different viewpoints. Breck could be in the scenes or use direct address/thought tracking to inform the audience of his inner thoughts on the situation he has become trapped in.
- **Activity 7**
Developing on from the split scene, using physical theatre devices, explore the pressure of LD, Breck's friends and how trapped Breck must feel. Consider using Frantic Assembly's hymns hands/flocking/synchronised movement/weight bearing/counter balances.

Section 7: Plans

• Activity 1

Solo task: Practically explore the delivery of LDs monologue. What happens when lines are whispered, said through gritted teeth, delivered as if making it up as he goes along, delivered as if it is all planned and rehearsed.

Pair work: Experiment with the staging of the monologue. Where could Breck be? Introduce one chair or a stool that each pair can use. Encourage the actors to experiment with who sits and who stands as well as the proxemics,

• Activity 2

The Spanish Exchange

Create 3 still images of the photos Breck took on the trip and put on Facebook. Add a caption using narration or placards

• Activity 3

In role writing - write the postcard that Breck would send home from the trip or extend the text message he sent to Lorin. This could develop into an opportunity to introduce the concept of subtext.

• Activity 4

Choral speaking Breck and LD. In pairs rehearse these lines vocally as if looking in a mirror so that it begins to sound like one voice. Layer on top of this subtle gestures that the actors do at the same time. Once confident with a short section encourage the actors to face the audience rather than each other. Discuss the impact this has and how Breck may have been feeling at this point.



Section 8: Murder

• Activity 1

Use the section of text when the triplets are with the police waiting for Barry to return. Freeze the action and thought track the triplets to explore their feelings when they are waiting.

• Activity 2

Explore the moment when LD comes online to talk to the friends after the murder. Take away the words and just focus on the physical and facial reactions of the characters. Write a text message/diary entry as one of the friends after they hear the news. How do they feel? This could be turned into a monologue and developed further.

• Activity 3

Whole class sound environment/soundscape to explore what is going on in Lorin's mind both before and after Barry calls her to tell her. Only the 5 actors playing Lorin can use lines from the text, everything else must be non-diegetic (use this as an opportunity to explore the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic sound if appropriate).

• Activity 4

Create an off text improvisation in pairs when LD's mum comes to visit him in prison before the trial. Consider this relationship and how his upbringing may have impacted on LD.





Exam Board Syllabus Links

AQA GCSE DRAMA

Component 2 Devising Drama

This play, and the themes in it could be used as a stimulus for original devised Drama. The students could perhaps be given the opening of the play or a key section of the play as a stimulus, or even a collection of news reports relating to the case itself. Alternatively, the text could be used as part of the research process for students keen to explore the style of verbatim theatre for their devised work.

Component 3 Text in Practice

For this unit each student is required to perform from two extracts of a published play. They use their performance skills to realise a character in performance. This text would be best suited for students keen to work in groups and would allow students to multi-role as part of the process. The text invites a good deal of creative invention during the page to stage process.

The text would also work well for design of technical students since there are plenty of opportunities for students to develop a soundtrack, projections/lighting designs and effective costume designs for performance. Set Design candidates would also enjoy the creative challenge of staging the action, perhaps working alongside another designer.



Exam Board Syllabus Links

EDEXCEL GCSE DRAMA

Component 1: Devising

The play itself can NOT be used as a stimulus; however there are other elements surrounding the text that could be explored to provide a strong, thought-provoking set of stimuli.

Textual, for example a news report or an article

Visual, for example a photograph or a documentary

Aural, for example a piece of music or a recording

Abstract, for example a theme, a word, or a mood

Providing the stimulus material is **NOT** from the text itself, you could explore The Breck Foundation, the story itself, or explore YouTube for documentaries and the phone call recording. There is plenty of information that is current and varied, to be able to source much research and content for portfolios. For further research there are other stories and cases of a similar nature.

Component 2: Performance from Text

Students would be expected to perform/design for two key extracts from a professionally commissioned play of at least 45 minutes in length. It must offer challenge and contrast to Component 3 lists.

This text would be best suited for students keen to work in groups and would allow students to multi-role as part of the process. The text invites a good deal of creative invention during the page to stage process.

The text would also work well for design of technical students since there are plenty of opportunities for students to develop a soundtrack, projections/lighting designs and effective costume designs for performance. Set Design candidates would also enjoy the creative challenge of staging the action, perhaps working alongside another designer.



Exam Board Syllabus Links

EDUQAS GCSE DRAMA

Characteristics of the text:

- **Genre:** Verbatim Theatre
- **Structure:** The play starts with the 999 call from LD after he has murdered Breck. The rest of the play is then a linear flashback of the events leading up until that point.
- **Character:** There are named characters and an ensemble. The character of Lorin, the mother, is split into five, demonstrating how she has become fragmented by Breck's murder.
- **Form and style:** Verbatim, minimalistic, ensemble and physical theatre.
- **Language/dialogue:** The language is simple with a number of unfinished sentences as different characters pick up the same point. Much of the dialogue is written as direct address.
- **Stage directions:** Stage directions are minimal leaving it open to the director's interpretation for staging.

Social, historical and cultural context:

The play was written in 2019, five years after Breck's murder.

Design Considerations:

- **Staging:** The performance was originally staged end on.
- **Set and Props:** Staging should be minimalistic with symbolic props (e.g. the heart stones). Projections could be used.
- **Costume:** Colour is used symbolically with only Breck being dressed in blue.



Exam Board Syllabus Links

OCR GCSE DRAMA

The most obvious way in which Mark Wheeler's play *Game Over* can be utilised is as your selected text for **Presenting and Performing Texts**. You could use multi-roling to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their vocal and physical skills to the examiner. For example a student could be the Operator in Section 1 and then Lorin in Section 7. On the other hand you may want your students to have the emotional arch by playing the same character in 2 extracts, here a particularly strong performer could play Lorin in Section 3 and later in Section 7. The roles of Barry and LD offer excellent opportunities for character exploration and don't ignore the power of Ollie's monologue in Section 4. It must be noted that many of the monologues in the text will not meet the timing requirements set out by OCR if they are simply performed directly to the audience by a lone actor. Students may need guidance to edit scenes in order to give all actors equal opportunities in a chosen extract or a monologue may need to be presented creatively in terms of when an actor begins to speak. Please refer to the specification if you are in any doubt about timing requirements.

An excellent way of using this text would be as a scheme of work to introduce students to the style of a Mark Wheeler play. This is useful if your chosen set text for **Drama: Performance and Response** is *Missing* by Dan Nolan or if you are using a different Wheeler text for Presenting and Performing. Allowing students to explore the genre and experiment with design possibilities before introducing the actual text they will be examined on can help avoid 'set text overkill'. This ensures that students are learning relevant information and skills but maintaining the interest in Drama that made them opt for the subject in the first place!

Due to the mature subject matter and timing of the piece there is no doubt that with slight edits *Game Over* could also be useful as an A level performance text if you incorporate multi-roling.



Directing 'Game Over'

The hardest challenge when approaching this text is the fact that the words themselves are so powerful, there is almost cause to debate how practical the production should be. As a result of this thought, and wanting to provide our young cast with opportunity, the decision was made to keep the cast on stage throughout. Acting as a voice of society or a visual representation of social media. Communicating the fact that this could happen to anyone, anywhere and at any time. There lies a challenge in what the ensemble then become? How should they be? Where should they be?

At this point, with an on-stage ensemble and a word-heavy text, the physical exploration with the cast began through finding moments; snatches of scenes or memories made from words taken from the read through or even specific lines of text, we started playing with making pictures or bringing these moments alive. Using physical theatre devices, music, a row of stools, a piece of gaming equipment as a symbol, moments started to build and ideas began to flow with how physical this piece could be and how the ensemble would be key to make this work as a convention.

The 'fractured' Lorin characters also encouraged the physical style of the piece. It was key that 'Lorin' played the main voice and was the most real version of the character, the other numbered Lorin's seemed to represent all the emotions and elements that make a human. We found it important to not make this explicit in our interpretation as it was decided that humans' are not that straight forward and by having a unified voice, a familiarity of them all being one through matching gestures and vocal intonation, it would be more successful – but as the script plays through, their element of emotion becomes more clearly conveyed through the physical gesture that still remained familiar. Further into the rehearsal process, it felt right to always have the Lorin's positioned on the stage, looking on to the action, representing the truth of how as a mother, Lorin was groomed too.

Finding the rhythm of the play was important to gain some form of rise and fall. After a simple blocking of the entire piece and seeing it run, it felt all one pace, this is because we start with tragedy and we end with tragedy. Transitions became key in providing some form of break or link from one section to the next. They needed to contrast to create the rhythm and lead appropriately into the following section, so gaming 'holding' screens, Mii's, characters from games or playing out scenes from games were all explored as options. With lighting, sound and media becoming integral to this decision making also.

The set was inspired by the fact that Breck had three screens, as Lorin references in the play. This gave the idea for using multi-media possibilities and shadow play. LD 'in the shadows' and always there, making Breck physically look smaller, and more vulnerable, through the lighting device

It was felt that we were not going to play this with accent or to try to make it true to the people who the play is about. Having a local accent and a personal, young interpretation of the role reinforced the message of the play and that this could have happened to anyone, anywhere. Independently from the rehearsal room, the cast had looked on social media, watched interviews and read articles to gain as much knowledge as possible. This certainly impacted on their making the roles more believable, yet personal.

The play is powerful, there is no debate there. It has a heavy message that must be communicated. It needs to be relevant to our audience for them to hear. It needs to have light and shade, and even show moments of happiness as there are always moments and memories that are happy.

Here's to seeing many more different productions of *Game Over*!

Lynsey Wallace



Interviews with the cast

I'm Matt and I play LD, Lewis Daynes

What are the challenges of playing Lewis Daynes?

I think he's a very difficult character to play, not in the sense of his age or his mannerisms but trying to get across to the audience his manner and how he is. Getting across the violent, scary, manipulative individual who is also extremely charming and diverse who can have a conversation with anyone.

How have you come to those conclusions to think that's what he's like?

I don't believe that's what he's like in person at all, but he uses the internet and he creates a persona over technology and computers and he builds up this just completely fake character who is probably a very fun individual to hang around with as the boys thought at the start. And as it says in the play, Breck had common sense, so he must have been fun. He must have had something about him, so that people wanted to spend time with him, especially online. The computer was where he was most confident, probably most confident on that than anybody else.



What preparation or research did you do to help you prepare for the role?

I watched and listened to the 999 call. Everything else I did was just through building a character. I believe, where everyone else is playing a person, a real person, nothing he did or said was real. So I thought I had open reign, free reign to kind of make a character, make a persona of what he was online and then make him interesting to watch; creepy and with characteristics to scare Lorin, manipulate Breck and to send those messages to the friends. All interwoven.

If you could give advice to someone playing LD, what would it be?

Good Luck! No, I'd probably say, make it your own. Maybe think about what someone who you think would intimidate and scare you – take parts of that. Think about someone you like, how charming they are and try and find a middle ground of two extremes. So some scenes you can be super aggressive and super creepy, but in other scenes you can be quite suave and charming. Find a blend. Get a couple of mannerisms – stare at people!

Have you enjoyed playing the role?

It's a difficult role, but I have very much enjoyed it. Not because I think he is a good person, but because he is a good character and you can do so much with the script. It's well written, gives substance but allows you to do what you like with it.

Interviews with the cast

Hi my name is Beth and I am playing Lorin.

What has been the biggest challenge in playing the role of Lorin?

She's a real person, so you have to make sure you are doing her justice in telling her story about Breck, whilst also giving a performance and being sensitive to the subject.

From doing this play, how has your knowledge increased about gaming online?

It's opened my eyes to how there is not necessarily an archetype of a paedophile online, it's more open - could be anybody and could happen to anybody even when you've done as much as you can.

What do you think about the style of the play?

It's a challenge to make it interesting for the audience whilst still being sensitive - because it's a really naturalistic play you can't improvise or make it over dramatic which might make it interesting for the audience, but wouldn't be appropriate.

What advice would you give to someone playing your role?

Watch interviews of Lorin, and getting her mannerisms, actually reading and understanding the words and putting yourself in her shoes. Which you can't do explicitly because you can't ever imagine something like that happening to you, the idea of getting a rough sense of how you'd personally react and bring yourself to it to make it more realistic.

Are you enjoying the process?

Yes, I am enjoying the process but it's a bit daunting!



Interviews with the cast

Hi my name is Tom and I play Breck Bednar

What are the challenges of playing the role of Breck?

It's obviously a verbatim play so I find that difficult as we can only go by how people remember Breck. I want to try and put my own spin on the character because, obviously, the message is that this could happen to anyone.

What have you done in terms of preparing for the role?

For the audition I did lots of research. I looked into it, listened to the call and watched a lecture of Lorin's, just to get a feel of the way she felt about the situation and then the documentary and the BBC3 piece on it. That gave me an insight into the whole situation and to understand it better.

How did you feel when you were cast as Breck?

Initially I felt very excited and then I realised the tricky bits about it and a decent amount of pressure because of the family and the people that know him to do him justice. I also felt like I didn't know if I was going to be enough for him.

What have you learnt in terms of grooming online and its dangers through doing the play?

Yeah, I didn't understand the extent that predators would go to to get what they want and this script has taught me how premeditated the grooming was. It was very thought out and psychologically took Breck apart and I didn't realise how serious it was. Anyone could've fallen for LD's lies. And that's the point of why we are doing this.

If someone else were to play the role, what advice would you give them?

Um, I would say don't feel pressured to play Breck as everyone says he needs to be played. Play him as a boy the audience can relate to so they can like and connect with him. It would lose all power of the message if they didn't like him. Keep it real and a character you feel you can act well for naturalism.



Interviews with the cast

Hi I am Luke and I am playing Barry.

How did you feel when you found out you were cast as Barry?

I felt a massive responsivity as he is Breck's Dad. It's an interesting part and in terms of Lorin's development of the Foundation, he isn't a very public figure. It was hard to develop a character from him. But yeah, I was very excited.

What have you done to prepare to play this character?

I googled him and found photos and a lot on his background, so I could start developing the character. My character has mainly come from what I think from my research and the script itself. My character has become more business-like as from the script he speaks more colloquially than formally, less than a Dad and more a Businessman.



What are the challenges of putting on this production?

It's been hard to balance the naturalism and verbatim with the need to put on a performance. With the whole idea of it being real with real people as well as us knowing that Lorin will come and see the performance. We want to be respectful and to help Lorin to spread the message. That has been the hardest thing - finding the balance.

Has the play changed your perception of grooming and gaming online?

In year 7-9 we go through the dangers of being online, it's what I expected but on a larger scale. In the fact it could happen to anyone, it's made me more aware of being online. I'm not a massive gamer, but it's made me more aware of my younger sister being online and making her aware of the things I've learnt through this process.

Have you enjoyed the process?

Yes, it's been really fun and interesting and a really good experience because I've never done anything like this as a style.

Interviews with the cast

Hi I'm Hannah and I play Carly, I'm Millie and I play Chloe, I'm Jack playing Sebastian

What have the challenges been playing the triplets?

Hannah – trying to keep the emotion whilst saying the words as we know its verbatim and trying to make our lines interesting

Millie – yeah, I think at the beginning when we were trying to get to know each properly the sibling dynamic was quite interesting, but it took a while though, to get it right?

Jack – I believe that it was difficult to get in the character's head because he's a real life person, which I found was difficult, but interesting at the same time.



With regards to these people and them being 'real' people, what research did you do to get to know them?

Jack – at first I looked at all the documentaries on it, as I didn't know what it really was, so that gave an insight on the impact on the family

Millie – yeah, Jack sent me a link which was the documentary which had all the siblings in it, so we could see them in real life and how they were reacting and they had home videos of when they were younger

Hannah – I looked up the girls Instagram's! Both of them are public so I looked at that and saw how they portrayed themselves online and saw how they put Breck on their Instagram's as well.

Jack – Sebastian's not public, I looked it up

Hannah – yeah he's private. And has 100 followers and the girls, they both have 1000!

What have you learnt from the dangers of gaming online from reading the play and from playing the characters? Has it changed your opinion? Stopped you from doing anything? Even just made you know a bit more?

Hannah – yeah it has actually, it's made me actually realise that things, like obviously I was aware that this happened to people but now I am fully aware that with this actual story that I know everything about, it's made me realise that this is actually a proper issue and also, I'm scared, for.... like I would never speak to someone I didn't know online

Millie – yeah, I think I thought that you would realise things, but it kind of showed me how it could be right in front of you and no one would notice and that was quite shocking I think, because the family, like they knew there was a problem but they thought they had solved it and everything was going on without even suspecting anything.

Jack – I didn't really think much about online safety and that before, like on Snapchat my maps was on and people could see where I was. This has really changed my point of view on safety and that. My Dad has talked to me about it and I have never really taken it that seriously, I've always taken it for granted, but now, it's way more serious, yeah.

Have you enjoyed the process? Or has it been really difficult?

Hannah – I've really liked it, and the people. It's been fun. I like this style of play as well. Yeah

Millie – I like that it is so literal and that it's things that people have actually said, but that's been challenging as well, you know trying to find a way to say what they have said. Realising they're real people has been quite cool.

Jack – I've found it really interesting and a good experience. A great experience. Yeah



Interviews with the cast

Hi I'm Lydia and I play Lorin 2, Jess and I play Lorin 3
Izzy and I play Lorin 4 and Molly playing Lorin 5.

What have the challenges been playing the Lorin's?

Izzy – I think it's that we are all the same person but different fragments, like we're different aspects of her personality so we have to be different but the same ... so that's one thing!

Jess – Making it realistic at the same time as making it interesting to watch, I feel like that's been the biggest challenge

Lydia – I think just creating the different moods, the tension

Izzy – change of pace

Lydia – and just relaxing it at times as well, to kind of give that sense of journey to the piece, whilst staying true to the character

Molly – erm yeah, we have lots of synchronised movement where we have to show unity, but we also have to show different aspects of Lorin and her different reactions.

What did you do in terms of preparing for the role?

Izzy – I watched a few documentaries as I wanted to see how she dealt with the grief, you can see that she's fighting in all of her interviews, I didn't know whether she'd be different to how she is there?

Molly – We looked at different characteristics of how she is, to find like, things she does with her hands, or different gestures she uses, and we did that by looking at different documentaries. But we don't want to do a 'caricature' of Lorin, so we're doing a kind of natural interpretation of her not imitating her, just picking up little traits that she has.

Jess – With that, almost embodying what she went through rather than being the person herself, putting ourselves in her shoes by watching the BBC documentary and her mannerisms, which brings us together as a group but also to show the audience what it would feel like to be anybody that went through this.





Through reading the play and rehearsing this, has your opinion changed about gaming online? Or have you learnt anything or do you just get it?

Lydia – I think a lot of things people are aware of, they just don't think it would happen to them personally or to the people around them, so the actual topic of grooming is one that people recognise but not in the essence that it is the person you have been talking to, who you have been talking to for 6 months and you've had a good conversation going. Because a lot of people do use Instagram and Snapchat, and it's so easy to find people online or not to be who you say you are, so I think its brought light that it CAN happen to people and anyone.

Molly – What's interesting is that it's a play but it feels like fiction that doesn't feel real, and the fact that even acting it, I sometimes feel it's not real, but then we have Barry say its real as part of the dialogue and that really hits home.

Izzy – Especially as its online games, which a lot of boys use, and they have these online 'conversations' and I think that tricks, especially young boys, into thinking that they know these people.

It's interesting that you say about the boys, do you think that this play has impacted on you as girls?

Izzy – I think it happens to girls but in..

Lydia – in different ways

Izzy – girls don't use, well that may sound stereotypical, but a lot of girls I know never use gaming to chat?

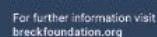
Jess – If a group of girls were going to meet someone they met online and who they didn't know, it would be more through Snapchat, Instagram, social media, but I think the gaming aspect of it is boys and because boys with mental health and boys who suffer is so unrecognised by society it goes unnoticed

Lydia – I think grooming, typically, is a male on a younger female and it's when it is something different and when it's boy on boy, it's less like it's grooming and they are just talking to someone. So I think it's important that it's a boy that this play revolves around, so it says this happens to absolutely anyone.

Jess – It makes it more relatable

Izzy – It's definitely an important message to get out there and this play really does do that.





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