

BACKCHAT...

with Bernie Black at YOUR school

TEACHER PACK



THE ROSES



TEWKESBURY

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for allowing The Roses Theatre to visit your school with *Backchat* written by Lucy Heywood. This crime prevention show has been designed to make young people think about the effects and consequences of getting excluded from school and the consequences of actions on others.

The Youth Justice Board's Annual Youth Crime Survey, completed by MORI, shows that excluded young people are more than twice as likely to commit offences as children in mainstream school. In the latest survey, 26% of young people in mainstream school say they have committed an offence in the last 12 months, while 60% of excluded young people say they have committed an offence over the same period.

The research for *Backchat* was carried out during workshops and performances with Year 8/9 pupils from three schools in Gloucestershire. All the students were identified as young people who were not engaging fully in school and were demonstrating either challenging/disruptive behaviour or a decline in their academic performance due to very low self esteem.

Jamie King's story in *Backchat* does not belong to one particular person that we worked with; rather it is a culmination of stories, events and interviews from students and staff.

This teacher's pack is designed to support the show and the workshop you have just seen. It aims to give you creative ways into discussion work that can be used in PSHE, Citizenship or tutor lessons. It encourages young people to make choices and deal with the consequences of their actions. The pack also further explores the themes raised in the show. All activities are flexible and can be adapted to various subject matters and settings.

ICE BREAKERS

Perfect Circle

(used during show specific workshop)

1. Ask the group to get into a perfect circle in 5 secs, this must include you.
2. Count down
3. Ask the group to check their feet. Their toes should be ever so slightly behind the toes of the people either side of them.

Learning point:

If they are in front they will be blocking each other and we cannot see each other.

You can then use this as a tool for focusing the group when you bring the group back together into a circle. By getting them to check their feet you have them focusing on something rather than chatting. Only ever give them 5 secs.



Anyone Who....

Skills: Listening, communication, warm up, ice breaker, sharing information

What is needed: A circle of chairs, one chair for each person apart from teacher who stands in the middle of the circle.

Group size: 6-30

1. The person in the centre of the circle makes a statement about themselves.

They must start the statement with *Anyone Who....* they then have to add something that is **true about themselves**. For example: Anyone who is wearing trousers.

2. When they have made the statement everyone who is wearing trousers must get up and find another chair.
3. They have to move and they cannot move to the chair either side of them.
4. One person will be without a chair they then have to make the statement from the middle of the circle and so the game continues.

This game is a great ice breaker and warm up. It might be worth stressing that it is non contact. It can be also used to start a discussion. For example, you can play it just with emotions, i.e. anyone who has ever felt angry, anyone who has ever felt betrayed, anyone who has ever felt proud. This can introduce a theme for the class during the warm up.

ICE BREAKER cont...

I am the Sun...

Skills: Listening, empowerment, negotiation, self esteem, creativity.

What is needed: No specific requirements, ideally room for a circle of chairs, one for each group member but can be played anywhere

Group Size: 4-30

1. Person A stand and says 'I am the sun/son'
2. Other members of the group respond by making a statement that relates to the first statement, for example they might say:
 - I am the moon
 - I am the sun cream
 - I am the mother
 - I am sunburn etc...
3. However, there can only be **two** suggestions following each statement, so it is the first two people to respond that can be counted.
4. Person A then chooses their favorite or the one they believe is the most relevant, A and the discarded option then sit down.
5. The person still standing repeats their statement and so the game continues.

For example:

A: *I am the sun*

B: *I am hot*

C: *I am sun cream*

A: *I choose C...I am sun cream*
(A and B then sit down)

C: *I am sun cream*

D: *I am slimy*

E: *I am a bottle*

C: *I choose D... I am a slimy*
(C and E sit down)

This game is a fantastic focus game which can get fairly competitive and very fast. This game only works if the group listens to each other and accepts that one person has the power to pick and choose answers. It can be used around a given theme and used as a fun, fast mind mapping exercise i.e. it can be used around the criminal justice system, Jamie's life, current affairs, celebrity news.



How we communicate..working with others

Just say "No!"

Skills: Understanding the frustration and boredom behind blocking ideas and becoming non communicative, cooperation, consequences of actions, body language

What is needed: No specific requirements, can be played in a class room

Group size: 2-30

1. Divide the group into pairs and ask them to label themselves A and B
2. A's ask B's questions. B's answer NO to everything, making no eye contact, and shutting their body language down.
3. A's continue to ask different questions for approx 90secs.

The important part of this exercise is the processing afterwards. It is good to find out how those people asking the questions felt having 'no' as an answer all the time, 9 times out of 10 you will get answers such as 'bored, frustrated, angry, couldn't think of what to say'; if they say otherwise you will pick up on body language during the exercise that will demonstrate the boredom and frustration of hitting the 'NO' brick wall!

Other questions that can lead into discussion with this exercise are as follows: are there times when you have been a 'no' person? Can you think of a situation when you have been confronted with a 'no' person? What have you done about it? When in the show is Jamie a no person? How does Bernie react to that? At those points in the show how could he react differently?



Skills: a physical, fun and liberating contrast to saying no, building on ideas, thinking creatively, and negotiation

What is needed: Cleared classroom or hall

Group size: 2-30

Yes Lets...

1. Split the group into pairs.
2. And in pairs start the game as follows:
A: "Shall we jump up and down?"
B: "Yes lets"
3. And then A and B do it together, once they have done it B continues:
B: "Shall we knock on the door?"
A: "Yes lets" and they run to knock on the door together.
They can sing, dance, shout, be wild dogs together.

You can then process the exercise to find out what did you had to do to make the game work? How did it feel to have someone sayings yes to your ideas?

Make for me... (used during the show specific workshop)

Skills: team work, thinking creatively, reflection on the show, body language, if you say no to ideas you cannot work together.

What is needed: A large open room or hall.

Group size: 4-30

1. Split the group into equal size groups no bigger than 5 in each group.
2. Call out a word or a title of a frozen picture, and give the groups a slow count down from 10.
3. Within that time the groups have to create a frozen picture that represents the title or word. Everyone in the group must be involved in the picture. The groups must be frozen and silent at the end of the 10 seconds.
4. You then give a point to the group that got into position the fastest and a point to the group with the most imaginative picture.
5. The first team to 3 or 5 is the winning team



Titles for Make for Me... pictures:

Anger
Mum
Fear
Sorrow
The little brother
Behind the scenes of Backchat
The threat
The good times
The trigger

This is a quick fire game and can get very competitive. The words that are given above and the picture ideas are related to Backchat but this game can be used for any theme, relationships, the criminal justice system, culture and identity. It is a great discussion starter and can be slowed down so that you look at the pictures in more detail.

Thought, Feeling, Action

FREEZE...What are you thinking, what are you feeling

Skills: Understanding the connection between thoughts and actions, changing cycles of behaviour, reading a situation
What is needed: A large clear room
Group size: 4-30

This exercise will be explained using examples from *Backchat* but can be geared around any situation or story.

1. Divide the group into equal groups no bigger than 5 per group
2. Everyone has 30 seconds to create a frozen picture of an event that happened in Jamie's life

i.e.: *a frozen picture of Jamie stealing toffee crisps.*

NOTE: it **must** be the moment that Jamie is taking the box off the trolley.

The rules of the picture are:

Everyone must be in the picture and connected to the picture, I.E they could be Jamie's friend, or the tuck shop supervisor.

There must be no violent contact

Make sure that everyone knows what character they are in the picture.



3. Pick one group to demonstrate the picture. Question the audience to find out what is going on and more information about the picture. Questions that could be used as a start are:

Who they think is in the picture?
Where are they?
What is going on?
What does that gesture mean?
Why is that person looking at that person in that way?

4. Get the audience to give each character in the frozen picture a thought, feeling and a line.

E: Picture is of Jamie nicking toffee crisps
Worker: Ok we have worked out this is Jamie's friend Carl, what is Carl thinking?
*Audience: He's thinking: **Has anyone seen him***
Worker: What is he feeling?
*Audience: **Buzzin!***
Worker: Great, what is his line?
*Audience: **Quick Jamie!***

FREEZE! What are you thinking, what are you feeling continued..

5. Ask the groups to create a frozen picture of 30 seconds before the event, call this picture **The Trigger**. It is showing something that happened before the event to trigger the action.

Rules of the picture:

Everyone must be in the picture and know what their character is thinking and feeling at that moment.

i.e. the group shows:

*Tuck shop supervisor emptying bins- **thought** 'I cannot believe we are so under staffed' **feeling** 'annoyed'*

Jamie's mate -Carl whispering in Jamie's ear that he won't nick the toffee crisps-

***thought** 'he won't be that stupid, surely' **feeling**- confident*

*Jamie being whispered to by Carl, **thought**- does he think I'm chicken, **feeling**- nervous*

6. Ask the group to form an audience and get each group to show their picture of **The Trigger** and then **The Event**

7. Return to the trigger picture and ask the group how Jamie could have evaluated or thought about Carl's comment differently so that it would have changed the outcome.

Explanation of exercise

*To change Jamie's actions we have to change his **thought** or his **evaluation** of the things that are happening around him. Changing his **evaluation/** **thought** of the event will change how he reacts to it and in turn how he feels about it.*

The 5 stages below provide a simple example of how we evaluate situations.

1. **Source** (it's raining)
2. **Sensory perception** (touch it, see it, smell it , taste it, hear it)
3. **Evaluation** (bloody hell the washing is out *or* brilliant I don't have to walk the dog)
4. **Action** (jump out of bed get washing in *or* roll over contented and go back to sleep)
5. **Emotion** (anger, aggravating *or* contentment happiness)



How actions affect others

Create the character

Skills: thinking creatively, group discussion, writing skills.

What is needed: Paper and pens, a class room or a clear room.

Group size: 2-30

This exercise provides a starting point for groups to develop characters and think creatively behind given information. It allows the group to think of characters as whole people rather than just in their given role: i.e. a doctor is not just a doctor, they might be a husband, with a pet dog named Boffy and he might be into squash on a Tuesday night. The doctor then becomes real.

In the context of *Backchat* and the theme of exclusion we have pulled out the four runner up contestants from the show. However, this exercise can be used for any given theme.



1. Get one person to sit in front of the class and another person to scribe onto paper so that you have a record of the information.
2. Use the person sitting at the front as the character you are talking about. Introduce the character and the information that you already know, for example:

This is Simone Carter she has had a privileged upbringing, but was kicked out of school for dealing ecstasy to her classmates.
(Please see below for information about the other four contestants in the show)

3. Ask the group questions to develop the character. Encourage lots of suggestions and get the group to pick and choose their favourite answers or the ones that they feel are the most realistic.

One of the main rules for this game if using it with an issue based theme is being creative but realistic!

Here are some questions to get you started:

How old is Simone? When is her birthday? Where does she live? What is the address? Who does she live with? What is her Mum's name? What is her Dad's name? Has she got any brothers or sisters? How old are they? What are their names? What does she do now she has been kicked out of school? What are her friends like? What are their names? What does she do for a good night out? What does she do in her spare time? Where does she hang out?

Create the character cont....

4. You now have more characters in Simone's life, Mum (Jackie), Dad (Bill), brother (Nathan), best friend (Catherine).

5. Split the group into smaller groups and give each group a character that has been discussed in the opening discussion, i.e. Mum (Jackie), Dad (Bill), brother (Nathan) and best friend (Catherine). Make sure that every group has a sheet of paper and a pen.

6. Feed all the groups the same questions to develop these characters, but don't give to long to work out the answers.

Example questions could be:

How old are you? When is your birthday? What is your best memory of Simone? What is your worst memory of Simone? What has Simone done to make you proud? What do you do to calm down when you are angry? How does Simone act when things are not going her way? How did you feel when Simone got excluded? Give me three words to sum up your relationship with Simone? Give me three words to sum up Simone?

7. Get one person from each group to become the character that they have been working on. Get all the characters on stage at the same time with Simone in the middle. Question the characters with the questions you have given the groups, find out from Simone how this makes her feel.

From this exercise, you can create scenes, play 'FREEZE... **what are you thinking, what are you feeling**', you can get the group to work individually on diary entries for the characters; you can get the characters to recreate a *Backchat* show situation. The possibilities are endless now you have got a cast of characters. Please see below for the **hat exercise** as another continuation from this exercise.

The other contestants from Backchat

Simone Carter she has had a privileged upbringing, but was kicked out of school for dealing ecstasy to her classmates.

Otis Beckford smokes cannabis and plays computer games everyday. He refused school so long they unofficially excluded him.

Becky Scrivens, was excluded from three schools for violence and abuse

Wayne Shroff hasn't been in education since he was caught with a knife at school.

Swap Hats

Skills : devising theatre, victim awareness, effects on others, listening, performance, conflict resolution

What is needed: hats for characters, whistle
Group size: 2-30

This is a fantastic follow up exercise to **Create the Character**. You can use the characters that have been created and explore further the effects that actions have on others and alternative ways of dealing with conflict situations.

1. Split the group into pairs and ask them to find their own space in the room.
2. Give each pair a scenario or conflict situation. To demonstrate we are going to use Simone and the family members in **Create the Character**

Possible Situations could be:

Simone is late home and Mum has stayed up waiting

Dad has been to get dirty plates out of Simone's room and finds a bag with a pill in it.

Simone is talking in class and the teacher asks her to be quiet.

Simone has borrowed £20 from her brother's wallet.

Simone has asked her best friend to look after a few pills until the end of the day.

3. Give the pairs 3 seconds to discuss who is going to start as which character. The member of the pair who is playing the character which is **not** Simone gets a hat or scarf that represents their character, i.e. a cap for day, a scarf for Mum, a cap for the brother.

4. On the whistle get the pairs to start the conflict scene (you can give a starting line if needed)

5. At random intervals blow the whistle. When the whistle goes get the pairs to swap characters by swapping hats and positions on stage.

6. They then continue the scene in their new roles by repeating the last line that was given before the whistle.

7. There is no limit to how often you blow the whistle but give the pairs time to develop the scene in between whistles and changes of character.

8. If the group are confident to perform get pairs to perform the scene in front of the rest of the group.

It is important to process this exercise. How was it swapping characters? How did you feel towards Simone when you were playing the opposite character? Were your characters 'yes' or 'no' characters? How could you change the outcome of the scene? Who had the authority? Why? How else could have Simone dealt with the situation? How do you think the characters would have felt walking away from this situation?



Further Information

This teachers pack has been put together by Honor Hoskins on behalf of the Roses Theatre Tewkesbury. All of the exercises were used during the *Count me IN* project with selected secondary school students, identified as those who were under achieving or difficult to engage. These exercises were used to create a devised piece of theatre which was performed on the Roses stage.

For more information about The Roses work with schools and vulnerable groups please contact the outreach department on 01684 853069 or outreach@rosetheatre.org

For further reading refer to:

[The Geese Theatre Handbook: Drama with Offenders and People at Risk](#) by Clark Baim, Sally Brookes, and Alun Mountford

[Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre](#) by Keith Johnstone

[Games for Actors and Non-actors](#) by Augusto Boal and Adrian Jackson