

Unit 9: Devising Plays

Unit code: L/502/5101

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

Learners will be creating pieces of performance and writing from practical drama workshop activities. Learners will develop skills and techniques for generating performance material.

● Unit introduction

The prime focus of the theatre practitioner's interest in performance material is often the scripted play. It is, of course, the case that the author of a script has devised a play. The process of devising plays requires a demanding and subtle set of skills. The playwright often experiences a lonely and fraught period while the content of the play slowly reveals itself on the pages of a script.

This unit requires learners to engage with the devising process in a group context, thus allowing the group to choose their own subject or theme for the play. The process of creating the play will become the responsibility of the group who will need to share the necessary tasks that will result in a unique and original performance piece. The chosen content of the play will govern the attendant research required to ensure that the content is viable and fit for purpose. The form and structure of the play will be fashioned to the content by the group who can decide on the most appropriate forms for their purposes.

The creation of an original play possesses its own satisfaction and is most useful to the professional theatre company when they have been commissioned for a particular purpose, perhaps in response to an education project or as a contribution to a themed arts festival. Equally, the learner can gain an insight into the thinking that has created a scripted play where the content, form and structure are received as a given but have emerged from careful considerations of the subject of the play. Learners will consider how best this might be presented when accounting for a specific audience and a particular set of staging conditions.

Learners should devise a play lasting between 15-30 minutes.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know how to use stimulus material
- 2 Know how to develop and shape ideas
- 3 Be able to rehearse for a devised performance
- 4 Be able to perform devised drama.

Unit content

1 Know how to use stimulus material

Ideas: eg personal/social issues, experiences, themes, celebrations

Research: eg historical and current events in fact and fiction, people, occasions, controversies

Stimuli: eg plays, stories, poetry, written articles, film, video, paintings, photographs, music, sounds, objects

2 Know how to develop and shape ideas

Ways of working: verbal eg discussion, brainstorming, debate, reporting, forum theatre method; improvised scenarios; physical eg body sculpting, role play, still-life, tableau work, improvised movement; visual eg graphic representation, charts, diagrams, doodles, digital images, video recordings; aural eg sound collages, gibberish, sound effects, music

Structuring work: eg plot, narrative, action, sequence of events, character/role development and delineation, scripting, editing, dialogue selection, structuring episodes/scenes, use of different dramatic elements, design and technical aspects, selection and rejection of material

3 Be able to rehearse for a devised performance

Personal management: time management; schedules; rehearsal programmes; deadlines; physical preparation; mental preparation; checks; communication; response to direction; discipline

Resources: personal; spatial; equipment; materials; human

4 Be able to perform devised drama

Performance skills: eg use of body, use of voice, materials, props, communication on stage, communicating ideas to an audience

Learners should devise a play lasting between 15-30 minutes.

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 respond to a range of stimuli, revealing creative ideas [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM, EP]	M1 respond to a range of stimuli, revealing awareness of their suitability for devising and performance	D1 respond to a range of stimuli with imagination, revealing a clear and creative grasp of their suitability for devising and performance
P2 develop chosen ideas and materials for devising [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM, EP]	M2 develop chosen ideas for devising, using insight and imagination to demonstrate a detailed response	D2 develop chosen ideas and materials for devising in a perceptive and comprehensive manner, demonstrating a thoroughly considered, insightful response
P3 demonstrate cooperation with other members of the company, making contributions to the group process [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM, EP]	M3 demonstrate cooperation with other members of the company in the devising process, making useful contributions	D3 demonstrate a high degree of positive cooperation with other members of the company in all aspects of the process
P4 develop devised performance through rehearsal, with support and guidance [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM, EP]	M4 develop devised performance through rehearsal, with minimum support and guidance	D4 develop devised performance through rehearsal, with thoroughly imaginative and independent application
P5 perform a devised theatre piece that communicates ideas to an audience. [TW]	M5 perform a devised theatre piece that accurately communicates its intentions to an audience and shows awareness of its style.	D5 perform a devised theatre piece that accurately communicates its style and intentions, fully engaging with the audience.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit will be delivered through workshops, giving learners underpinning knowledge to develop a devised performance for final assessment. Learners will firstly need to know how to use stimulus material and initially this will be tutor led, sharing and working with learners on how research can lead to building on different ideas, and how using a variety of stimuli will help to develop ideas further. Learners at the early stages should be encouraged to work in small groups as the tutor instructs them on how to develop, shape ideas and structure their work, whilst introducing them to a variety of drama techniques. This can be done by arranging learners to work in small groups to develop rehearsed improvisations to be performed to the rest of the group. After each improvisation the tutor could instruct learners to add a new or different technique (thought tracking, marking the moment, narrating, etc). Tutor and peer group assessment of these small performances will help develop ways of working and further shape learners' ideas. The workshops must enable learners to explore their response to a variety of stimuli through activities that involve physical and vocal representation of concepts. The workshops will naturally lead to the development of learners working towards a devised performance for assessment. Progress towards the realisation of the performance will rely upon learners' ability to work cooperatively and creatively as a team, sharing their responsibilities of production and resolving potential conflicts. Successful cooperation will result not only in effective performance of their devised theatre piece but also in a greater knowledge and understanding of the material in its significance, the discipline of theatre form and the complexities of theatre practice. Tutors will reinforce to learners how their own personal management will be a key to their group's success. By the nature of the unit, it will also give learners an opportunity to develop group skills and work as part of an ensemble. It is important that learners do not spend long periods discussing the devising process but get the material 'on its feet' in order to use the devising process effectively.

Where appropriate, research into subject matter, themes and issues should be developed by both group and individual learners. Tutors might like to offer experience of well-known plays as examples of the potential range of dramatic structures and performance styles available. Also the tutor should show some DVD examples of devised performances by professional companies such as DV8 and Trestle Theatre.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Know how to use stimulus material

Teacher led workshops underpinning knowledge enabling learners to respond to a variety of stimuli through activities that involve physical and vocal representation of concepts.

Learners' activity in workshops – responding to stimuli:

- Plays, stories, written articles, film, video, paintings, photographs, music, sound, objects, etc.

Learners' homework - to write up log with a response to each tutor led task after workshop session.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Teacher-led workshops underpinning knowledge enabling learners to respond to a variety of explorative strategies and drama medium.

Learners' activity in workshops –

Responding to strategies:

- still image, thought tracking, narrating, hot seating, role-play, cross-cutting forum theatre, marking the moment, etc.

Responding to Drama Medium:

- mime, movement, voice, space, levels, sound/music, set, lighting, etc.

Learners' homework - maintaining a working notebook which charts progress and records ideas, using the language of drama to communicate their ideas and evaluate work.

Assignment 1: Creating a Devised Performance – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5

Introduction to assignment.

Learners to work in small groups of between 3 and 10:

They have been commissioned to produce a devise a 30 minute theatre piece with the title 'It's the End of the World As We Know It...'

Learners' must be able to demonstrate that they can:

- understand and utilise different explorative strategies
- research the given stimuli
- shape ideas to communicate meaning through drama
- develop and realise ideas within a group
- maintain a working notebook which charts progress and records ideas
- use the language of drama to communicate ideas and evaluate work
- respond to tutor's verbal and written feedback
- identify strengths and weakness and write up an action plan on how to address weaknesses
- perform in an original piece of drama.

Assessment

To achieve a pass for grading criteria 1 and 2 learners will work in small groups of between three and no more than 10 and provide evidence through a working notebook, video diary or blog that states what they did for each session identifying stimuli used and how they developed the stimuli. To achieve the merit grade for 1 and 2 learners will identify how they developed the stimuli and offer further ideas on how they could develop it further and also offer alternative ideas. To achieve a distinction learners will identify and suggest alternative ideas, revealing a clear and creative understanding by explaining why it is suitable for performance. Learners will also use the language of drama accurately to communicate their ideas and evaluate their work. Tutor observation and feedback sheets reviewing their individual process should be provided commenting on their selection, exploration, editing and shaping of the material.

The devised piece should last between 15 and 30 minutes depending on the size of the performance groups. To achieve a pass for grading criteria 3 and 4 learners must take an active role within a group and assume an identified role. However, their contribution is limited which will be evidenced through the tutor observation and feedback sheet and their working notebook. DVD evidence will show learners working and their verbal response on group progress or ideas from others is limited. To achieve a merit for grading criteria 3 and 4 learners will work cooperatively and be sensitive to other group members' by listening and trying out their ideas as well as offering their own ideas. Their working notebook will also comment on other group members' ideas and convey their own thoughts on the suitability of these ideas as well as their own. DVD evidence will show learners actively working, communicating ideas and reviewing process. To achieve a distinction for grading criteria 3 and 4 learners will respond positively to group ideas with enthusiasm. They will demonstrate a high degree of support for other group members by asking relevant questions to extend original ideas from others. Their working notebook will comment on the process and use references to research and identify similarities to other practitioners. DVD evidence will show learners appropriately responding with enthusiasm and passionately supporting the group to achieve its aims.

Learners will perform their piece to their target audience. To achieve P5 learners will use performance skills to convey some of their ideas to an audience. However the DVD evidence will show some limits in their use of voice, body, materials and/or props to communicate their ideas. To achieve M5 learners will use performance skills to convey ideas to an audience accurately. The DVD evidence will show relevant use of voice, body, materials and/or props to communicate their ideas and will demonstrate an understanding of the style used. To achieve D5 learners will perform a devised theatre piece accurately communicating its style and intentions to their target audience. The DVD evidence will show excellent use of voice, body, materials and/or props to communicate their ideas, fully engaging their target audience.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5	Assignment Creating a Devised Performance	Working as part of a theatre company to develop an original piece of theatre for performance: they have been commissioned to produce a devised a 30 minute theatre piece with the title 'It's the End of the World As We Know It...'	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> summary of individual and group research records of discussion and exploratory activities in working notebooks tutor feedback sheets an action plan that includes identification of individual strengths and weakness video evidence of rehearsals video evidence of performance.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Acting Skills	Acting Skills and Techniques	Theatre in Education
	Devising Plays	Theatre for Children
		Principles of Acting
		Drama Improvisation

Essential resources

Learners will require a practical studio space in which to work and video/DVD equipment will be needed for evidence recording. An appropriate range of stimulus materials and supporting research material is required and learners should have access to the internet for research.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should develop links with local theatre companies, art workers, community groups, local arts development officer and larger more local organisations. Guest speakers from these types of organisations could be invited to speak to students.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Performing Arts Student Book* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906787

Jewers S, Carnaghan C and Webster P – *BTEC National Teacher Resource Pack* (Pearson Education, 2010) ISBN 9781846906794

Artaud A – *The Theater and its Double* (Grove Press, 2000) ISBN 9780802150301

Boal A – *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780415267083

Brook P – *The Empty Space* (Penguin, 2008) ISBN 9780141189222

Clements P – *The Improvised Play: The work of Mike Leigh* (Methuen, 1983) ISBN 9780413504401

Fredman R and Reade I – *Essential Guide to Making Theatre* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) ISBN 9780340655146

Grotowski J – *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Routledge, 2002) ISBN 9780878301553

Hodgson J – *Improvisation Now* (Methuen, 1997) ISBN 9780413705402

Lamden G – *Devising: A Handbook for Drama and Theatre Students* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2000) ISBN 9780340780084

Mackey S (editor) – *Practical Theatre: A Post-16 Approach* (Nelson Thornes, 1997) ISBN 9780748728572

Neelands J and Goode T – *Structuring Drama Work: A Handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama* (Cambridge, January 2000) ISBN 9780521787291

Oddey A – *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook* (Routledge, 1996) ISBN 9780415049009

Websites

These links are for a range of devising companies and practitioners in the UK. These sites contain information on current and past projects, reviews, articles and essays, and links to resources, publication and video archives of their work.

www.age-exchange.org.uk	Age Exchange
www.dv8.co.uk	DV8 Physical Theatre Company
www.forcedentertainment.com	Forced Entertainment
www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk	Forkbeard Fantasy
www.redladder.co.uk	Red Ladder
www.stanscafe.co.uk	Stan's Café
www.trestle.uk.com	Trestle Theatre Company

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	responding to a range of stimuli, revealing some creative ideas developing chosen ideas and materials for devising
Creative thinkers	generating ideas and exploring possibilities for performances
Reflective learners	reviewing and reflecting on the performance work and acting on the outcomes to modify and progress
Team workers	collaborating with others to produce a devised performance
Self-managers	organising time and resources and prioritising actions through the rehearsal process.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	planning and carrying out research to develop performance ideas
Creative thinkers	trying out different techniques and following ideas through adapting their ideas as ideas and circumstances change
Reflective learners	inviting feedback on their own work and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism evaluating their experiences and learning to inform future progress
Team workers	working in groups to develop original performance material managing discussions to reach agreements and achieve results
Self-managers	responding positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed dealing with competing pressures, including personal and work related demands.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching for the workshop
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching for the workshop identifying the dramatic potential of selected stimulus material
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	communicating with their performance group
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	planning activities evaluating work
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching and preparing a script for performance
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	researching and preparing a script for performance writing a theatre programme preparing a press release.