



Pearson
Edexcel

GCSE (9–1) Drama

Prescribed Text Guide

Gone Too Far!, Bola Agbaje

Issue 1





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Prescribed edition for Component 3

Gone Too Far!, Bola Agbaje – ISBN 9781350261037 (Bloomsbury, Methuen Drama).

Summary

When his older brother moves to England from Nigeria, Yemi's world is changed. Often embarrassed by Ikudayisi's behaviour, Yemi tries to teach him how to behave in this new environment but various cultural clashes cause interesting – and sometimes challenging – conflicts. Questions regarding identity, heritage and race are constantly asked as the narrative moves towards its violent, yet ultimately redemptive, conclusion.

Scene 1


Yemi's bedroom.

Yemi and Ikudayisi are meant to be performing a form of punishment, but only Ikudayisi does so while Yemi plays on his games console. Ikudayisi complains until Yemi shouts at him to leave him alone, alerting Mum (off-stage), who threatens to come up. She continues to complain about their behaviour until the phone rings and her attention is taken. The boys continue to bicker, until Mum calls in Yoruba for Ikudayisi to go to her, allowing Yemi to go back to his game. She then calls for Yemi, who complains, provoking Mum to continue to criticise the boys. As Ikudayisi returns and plays the game, Yemi goes to his Mum. She tells him to take his bother and go to the shop. Yemi complains, asking why Ikudayisi can't go alone, causing more conflict with Mum. He eventually agrees under pressure from his mother.

Scene 2

A run-down, South London estate with the shop at the far end.

The Shopkeeper is putting out newspapers on a stand. There is Islamic music playing loudly from inside the shop. England flags hang from the shop. Yemi is wearing his hoodie over his head and the Shopkeeper refuses him entry into the shop until he removes it. Yemi is unhappy and argues with the Shopkeeper. Ikudayisi interjects, using an American accent which stuns Yemi, who then notices Ikudayisi has his trainers on. As the brothers argue, the Shopkeeper begins to step back inside and is followed by Yemi. The Shopkeeper turns and puts his hand in Yemi's face, physically stopping him from entering. The Shopkeeper threatens to call the police unless Yemi removes the hood – at one point almost begging him to do so. Yemi tries to point out that he is only there to buy milk and that the Shopkeeper should not be making assumptions about him, suggesting that they have things in common – namely being racially oppressed. The Shopkeeper does not agree, angering Yemi, who then asks if the shop is not just a front for a '*bomb factory*'. This accusation causes the Shopkeeper to become highly defensive, shouting that he does not support terrorism and that he loves England. Yemi then tries to explain that he was only making a point that it is wrong to judge people on the way they look. However, the damage is done, and the Shopkeeper closes the shop, locking the doors. Yemi becomes angry, kicking the door and racially abusing the Shopkeeper. Ikudayisi tries to calm Yemi down and suggests they leave before the police arrive. Yemi refuses, continuing to make negative comments regarding race while trying to explain to Ikudayisi



that the problem is not about Yemi wearing a hood but because of his skin colour. Ikudayisi does not understand, provoking Yemi into making racially insulting comments towards him. After Yemi pushes him to the floor, Ikudayisi says he is going home and tell Mum what happened. Yemi bars his way, threatening to tell Mum that Ikudayisi tried to steal something.

Scene 3

A different part of the estate.

Ikudayisi is complaining they have been walking for ages. He and Yemi argue about getting the milk for Mum before they return home. Armani and Paris enter and Yemi instantly changes his attitude, trying to impress the girls. Ikudayisi, using his fake American accent, introduces himself and the girls are amused to find out that he is Yemi's brother – even though Yemi pretends not to know him due to embarrassment. The girls exclaim that they are surprised to learn that Yemi is African, confusing Ikudayisi, who responds by speaking Yoruba. Armani demands to know what he said but Yemi is unable to translate. The conversation becomes more aggressive as Yemi demands to know '*what does an African look like?*'. Armani makes an offensive comment, resorting to stereotypical physical attributes, which angers Yemi. Ikudayisi continues to inflame the situation by insulting Armani in Yoruba, antagonising her. The argument carries on, becoming increasingly racially insulting. Yemi warns Armani to '*watch your mouth, yeah.*'. She continues to provoke, putting on a fake African accent, leading Yemi to poke Armani on the head and, as Paris tries to break up the altercation, she gets pushed to the ground. Ikudayisi helps her up, but Armani is furious that Yemi made physical contact with her. She threatens Yemi that her boyfriend will take revenge, even implying that he will kill Yemi. As she continues to threaten him, Yemi attacks Armani again as the scene ends.

Scene 4

A different part of the estate.

Yemi is still annoyed after his argument with Armani. Ikudayisi suggests that he have talked with her and not hit her. Yemi again blames Ikudayisi and says that if Armani's boyfriend does come looking for trouble then he is ready. As Ikudayisi tries to calm him down, Yemi again makes reference to Nigeria, asking him why he constantly mixes up English and Yoruba? Ikudayisi suggests that Yemi learn the language but is met with scorn. Ikudayisi then begins to mimic Armani, causing the brothers to laugh. He then teaches Yemi a few words of Yoruba before Yemi starts to resist his apparent urge to learn the language. Ikudayisi keeps trying, suggesting some phrases that he thinks will impress women. Yemi continues to resist, becoming annoyed when Ikudayisi suggests Yemi fancies Paris but has never even kissed a girl! An Old Lady enters and, seeing the two boys, contemplates turning back. Ikudayisi approaches her and asks if she would like to sit down on the bench the boys are sat at. She is frightened, assuming the boys are looking to cause trouble. As Ikudayisi tries to get Yemi to move, taking his phone, the Old Lady drops her shopping in fear. As Ikudayisi tries to help her, she becomes more fearful, telling him he can take whatever he wants. Yemi, frustrated by Ikudayisi's naivety, tells him to leave her alone and for her to leave, which she fearfully does.



Scene 5

A different part of the estate.

Armani is telling Razer and Flamer about her altercation with Yemi. While she exaggerates some of the incident, Paris tells the truth, causing Armani to get annoyed with her. Razer and Flamer defend Paris, winding Armani up even more. They are approached by a big boy in a hood, with the boys pulling out knives. Everyone relaxes when they realise it is Blazer, although Armani is not so pleased to see him. It is clear the boys revere Blazer and follow his advice, with even Blazer referring to himself as a '*preacher*'. Armani is desperate to continue her story and starts by referring to Yemi as '*dat babatud*', causing Blazer to interrupt, taking offense that Armani is referring to all people of African heritage as '*babatunde*'. He becomes quite threatening, trying to establish his authority. Armani is not impressed and tries to stand up to Blazer, stating that she is from '*yard*'. Blazer counters with an argument that her mum is white and that she has probably never even seen her dad. He tells her she has never set foot off the estate, let alone been to Jamaica. The tension in the group rises as Blazer tells Armani to learn some manners and that Razer should establish his authority over her. As the boys try to smooth things over, Armani again stirs things up by refusing to let the argument with Blazer go, causing Razer to step in. As Razer and Armani argue, Paris and Flamer begin to laugh, with Blazer declaring the situation is too childish and so he is leaving. As he does so, he tells the boys that he has a task for them and to meet him later. After he has gone, Paris announces that she thinks he is cool, further irritating Armani who continues to insult him and claiming he only uses his nickname as he is ashamed of his true name and heritage. As the argument continues, Armani begins to blame Africans for slavery, confusing the others, who point out that white people also made a major contribution to the slave trade. As Armani becomes increasingly defensive, she accuses Paris of racism, claiming that Paris' friendship is just a cover and that she is jealous of Armani for having lighter skin. The conversation grows increasingly heated, with Paris unloading her pent-up frustrations towards Armani. She claims Armani's issues stem from a conflict of identity, coming from a mixed-race background. Paris reminds Armani how she has been the one to support her and help her in troubled times. Infuriated, Armani flies at Paris, only to be held back by Razer and Flamer, leaving Paris to declare '*The truth hurts, doesn't it?*'.

Scene 6

The other side of the estate.

Yemi has left Ikudayisi, who has chased him, trying to find him. When he does, Yemi tells him to leave him alone, explaining that he wishes Ikudayisi had just stayed in Nigeria and that things are very different here. Ikudayisi cannot understand why Yemi is humiliated by his behaviour and believes that it is important to be true to yourself. Yemi continues to get frustrated, making inaccurate claims about Nigeria, calling it a '*backward country*'. This infuriates Ikudayisi who again states he is proud of who he is. Yemi counters by reminding him of his fake American accent, but Ikudayisi still proclaims to be proud to be Nigerian. The brothers continue to argue, with Yemi trying to get Ikudayisi to understand that he needs to try to fit in to the '*English*' way of doing things, whereas Ikudayisi thinks Yemi should embrace his Nigerian heritage and even take a visit there. He does not understand why Yemi is not proud of his background and the scene ends without agreement.



Scene 7

The estate. Early evening.

Having got the milk, the brothers are returning home, eating chicken and chips when Yemi spots Blazer. He tries to conceal that he is with Ikudayisi, but they begin to talk. Quickly, Blazer and Ikudayisi begin to speak in Yoruba, frustrating Yemi who cannot understand them. Ikudayisi reinforces how he is proud to be Nigerian and Blazer questions Yemi as to why he is so resistant to his heritage. He tells Yemi that he needs to understand respect and, because of his reputation, Yemi listens to him. Blazer continues to explain how he respects his family and is not ashamed to honour the Nigerian traditions he has been brought up with. Blazer leaves, and Yemi, lost in thought, begins to ignore Ikudayisi again. He cannot believe that Blazer is not only African, but also proud of the fact. There is a softening in the relationship between the brothers and Ikudayisi tells Yemi that his name means '*God suit you*'. Yemi is disappointed while Ikudayisi tries to explain that it loses something in translation. When Yemi learns that Ikudayisi means '*Death spared me*', he is jealous, believing he should have had that name, which leads the boys to start play fighting. The fighting gets a little rougher with Yemi getting Ikudayisi in a headlock as two Police Officers enter. Yemi lets Ikudayisi go as the Police Officers begin to question the brothers about what they were doing and implying that Yemi was attacking Ikudayisi. Despite protests from the boys, the situation begins to get out of hand and Yemi becomes increasingly defensive when questioned. The Police Officers, although initially *appearing* to choose their words carefully, begin to use racially charged language and level subtle accusations against Yemi, angering him. He goes to walk away but is grabbed by Police Officer 2 who then refers to Yemi as a '*Yardie*' with Police Officer 1 mockingly speaking in a dodgy Jamaican accent. As Yemi struggles, he tells Ikudayisi that he warned him that black people are treated differently. As he struggles free, he tries to grab Ikudayisi's hand to leave, but is again held back by Police Officer 1. In response, Yemi cries out '*Don't try touch me, you perv!*' and is instantly handcuffed. The Police Officers inform Yemi they suspect he is under the influence of cannabis and Ikudayisi then offers them money to release him. The Police Officers refuse, claiming they are not corrupt and begin to question Yemi. Yemi, still frustrated, invites the officers to arrest him, with the Police Officers suggesting that he could be arrested for disturbing the peace. This infuriates Yemi who points out that it was the Officers who were disturbing his peace and they are only picking on him because of his skin colour. Police Officer 1 tells Yemi not to '*use the race card*' and Yemi responds by saying that they are stopping him from going home. The situation begins to calm down as the Police Officers realise there is a crowd watching them. Ikudayisi apologises to the police, again angering Yemi, who tells him not to apologise and pushes him. Instantly, the Police Officers hold him back and Police Officer 2 addresses the crowd to tell them that they are only trying to protect Ikudayisi. Yemi counters by shouting out to the crowd that the only reason the Police are holding him is because he is black. As he does so, the Police Officers receive a call on their radios to attend another incident. They let the brothers go, forcing Yemi to walk one way but Ikudayisi to go the other way, waiting until both boys are out of sight.



Scene 8

The other side of the estate.


Razer is telling Armani to be nicer to Paris and that Flamer would like to ask Paris out. Armani refuses, leading Razer to tell her that she is being childish. This riles Armani who demands to know why Razer keeps talking about Paris. Frustrated, he tells her that he cannot have a conversation with her without her complaining about something. She apologises but feels that she has been victimised and that neither Paris or Razer stood up for her. She challenges him to sort out Yemi for her. He refuses, saying he is not going to get '*involved in this African war*' she is trying to start. Armani responds by using racially provocative language about Africans. Razer refuses to get involved, saying that if he gets into trouble again, he could go to prison. He tells Armani that she often causes trouble by what she says. She is infuriated by his lack of action and threatens to break up with him. He says he is fine with this and makes it clear that he will not be influenced by her trying to get him to do something wrong. Frustrated, he exits, leaving Armani alone and speechless.

Scene 9

Ikudayisi is looking for Yemi when he bumps into Flamer, accidentally stepping on his trainer. Flamer makes a big deal of this, claiming that Ikudayisi has ruined his trainers and demanding money. He pulls a knife and demands Ikudayisi empty his pockets. When he discovers Ikudayisi is telling the truth about not having anything on him, he tells him to remove his trainers and takes them. Yemi enters just as Flamer runs off with the shoes. Ikudayisi is clearly shaken by the incident but Yemi is furious that his trainers have been stolen, berating Ikudayisi for not fighting back. As he does so, Armani enters, looking for Razer. As she sees Yemi, she makes a violent gesture to him before running off. Resolutely, Yemi declares he is going to sort this out, believing that Armani had arranged the incident in revenge for the earlier exchange between them. While Ikudayisi begs for them to go home, Yemi uses Blazer's advice about demanding respect to justify his decision to go after the group. Ikudayisi implores Yemi to stop, telling him how this is such a small thing to get upset about and how he needs to get some perspective about life. However, Yemi is determined, pushing Ikudayisi out of the way.

Scene 10

Armani and Razer are walking nearby when Yemi appears. He thinks that Razer has stolen the trainers and instantly accuses him. Razer, trying to keep the peace, denies it and suggests Yemi leaves. However, Yemi will not leave it and Armani begins to encourage Razer to '*Put him in his place*'. Ikudayisi keeps trying to tell Yemi that it wasn't Razer who took the trainers, but Yemi does not listen, constantly demanding them back. The situation begins to escalate, with Yemi attacking Razer. In defence, Razer pulls his knife, leading to Armani encouraging him to stab Yemi. This momentarily distracts Razer, allowing Yemi a moment to attack and gain control of the knife. Ikudayisi implores Yemi to put the knife down, sentiments echoed by Armani. Yemi then turns to her, waving the knife towards her, prompting Razer to tell him to put the knife down. As Ikudayisi continues to tell Yemi to put the knife down, Yemi pours out his frustrations about how people on the estate treat Africans '*like they are beneath them*'. Suddenly, Ikudayisi cries out that he just wants everyone to get along and stop the division, pleading with Yemi to give him the knife and trying to physically take it from him. As he does, the knife falls to the ground, allowing



Razer to pick it up. Razer then goes to leave with Yemi rushing him to attack. Ikudayisi gets between them, accidentally getting his arm cut by the knife. Both Yemi and Razer are shocked, frightened of what has just happened, with Razer energetically protesting that it wasn't his fault.

Scene 11

Yemi and Ikudayisi's bedroom. Two weeks later.

The brothers are getting dressed for a party, but Ikudayisi is struggling as his arm is in a sling. It is clear that the relationship between the two has greatly improved and Ikudayisi is playing on the sympathy for his injuries. The boys discuss the events after the initial incident, revealing that both Yemi and Razer were very upset. The humorous mood becomes a little more serious as the boys are about to leave. Yemi asks Ikudayisi if he has forgiven him and apologises. He tells Ikudayisi that he now realises what is important and, after Ikudayisi exits, Yemi chooses a traditional Nigerian hat to wear, stands in front of the mirror and begins to sing '*Green white green on my chest, I'm proud to be a Nigerian!*'.



Characters

Yemi – sixteen years old

Yemi is sixteen years old and has been brought up on the estate in London. He appears angry and defensive, possibly as a result of the prejudice he has experienced. Living in a small flat on the estate, his life changes when his older brother comes from Nigeria to live with them, having to share his bedroom. Yemi appears to resent his Nigerian heritage, refusing to learn Yoruba and constantly telling Ikudayisi how to behave. He is embarrassed by his brother's behaviour in public and tries to distance himself from him. The altercation with the Shopkeeper is an early indication of how he tries to make a valid point about racial division and stereotyping, but fails to do so effectively or appropriately, perhaps highlighting his immaturity. He also resents Armani's apparent prejudice, reacting aggressively and instinctively, making the situation worse rather than finding a solution. However, his respect for Blazer does mean that he is prepared to listen to his advice. Discovering that Blazer is also Nigerian changes his perspective and he begins to feel some pride in his heritage. Despite this, his anger returns when he is mistreated by the Police Officers and he uses this experience to demonstrate to Ikudayisi that he thinks people are treated differently purely because of their skin colour. His reaction to Ikudayisi being robbed by Flamer highlights his impulsive nature, refusing to listen to the people around him, resulting in him reaching the wrong conclusion. The aggressive response leads to his brother being injured but the consequences could have been so much worse. However, his concerned and fearful reaction to the injury is the catalyst for a change of attitude – both to his heritage and also towards his brother.

Ikudayisi – eighteen years old

Ikudayisi is very proud of his Nigerian upbringing and finds it difficult to accept Yemi's resistance. The stark change of culture in Britain highlights his innocence, but he is clearly a principled person who believes it is important to be nice to everyone. His desire to support Yemi in understanding his African culture, his concern about how Yemi speaks to the Shopkeeper and Armani, and his attempt to help the Old Lady show he has a desire to be good. However, his lack of awareness of British society can lead to issues, such as the Old Lady becoming more fearful or his attempt to bribe the Police Officers. To some people, Ikudayisi appears to be eccentric and naïve, prompting them to take advantage, with Flamer mugging him being a perfect example. His impassioned plea that he just wants '*everyone to get along*' demonstrates that, no matter what negativity he has experienced, he has a desire to make the world a better place.

Mum

Although unseen, Mum can definitely be heard. Much of the time, she is ranting at the boys, particularly Yemi. She is a formidable character whom the boys fear. While she states she wishes she had sent Yemi to boarding school in Nigeria, when she answers the phone, she puts on a very English accent, raising interesting questions about how she sees her place in society.



Shopkeeper

His refusal to allow Yemi into the shop without lowering his hood triggers Yemi's anger. It is not exactly clear why he stands his ground, but he reacts strongly when Yemi makes his accusations against him, appearing to be intimidated. The Shopkeeper is described as Muslim Bangladeshi. His shop is draped with England flags while also playing Islamic prayer music, hinting that he also is trying to embrace two different cultures.

Armani – fifteen years old

Quick to make judgements, Armani often speaks without fully considering the implications of her actions. She appears to really struggle with her identity, which may be the root cause of her need to lash out at those around her. Her argument with Yemi sets in motion the chain of events which lead to the violent incident between Yemi and Razer. Armani likes to be the centre of attention and seems to enjoy creating conflict. Her strong opinions about the distinctions between Africans and Jamaicans cause Ikudayisi to mock her in Yoruba, irritating her further. Her language becomes more provocative and is directed at Yemi. When he snaps, she is quick to play the victim. When she relays the story later, she aims criticism directly at Paris for not sticking up for her and is irritated when interrupted by Blazer. Annoyed by his popularity with the others, it is possibly because she is jealous. When Blazer tells her she is rude, she responds with more attitude towards him. Her need to provoke reactions leads her to accusing Paris of racism. She unsuccessfully tries to incite Razer to fight with Yemi, which angers him. However, during the exchange between Yemi and Razer, she again provokes the boys in an attempt to get them to fight, yet when Ikudayisi is injured, she reacts with fear, highlighting that her attitude is likely just an act.

Paris – sixteen years old

Quiet and calm, Paris is almost the opposite of Armani. In the two scenes she appears, she often tries to keep the peace but when she is provoked by Armani's tirade, she stands up to her with significant strength. She seems genuinely hurt by the accusations levelled against her and demonstrates she is willing to stand up for what she believes is right.

Old Lady

Her misinterpretation of Ikudayisi's helpful intentions symbolise the deeper divisions in society. She makes assumptions about Ikudayisi purely based on his appearance. Not only is this a shock for Ikudayisi while also reinforcing Yemi's point of view, but it is a strong – and sad – comment on society.

Razer – seventeen years old

Razer appears level-headed and sensible. There are hints he has been in trouble with the police in the past and is trying to put that behind him. However, his promise to meet Blazer on the 'frontline' and the fact he carries a knife do indicate a more sinister element to his personality. He challenges Armani's views, supporting Paris as well as trying to find a calmer solution to his altercation with Yemi. However, the fact he pulls the knife suggests that he sometimes falls back into old habits of resolving problems and is another example of a character facing conflicts within their identity.



Flamer – seventeen years old

Appearances are important to Flamer. He appears to want to impress Blazer and is willing to interject when things get a little heated. By stealing Ikudayisi's trainers and threatening him with a knife, it is clear that status, control and power are important to Flamer. However, he does not seem to be concerned about the impact this has on other people.

Blazer – eighteen years old

The self-styled 'preacher' of the estate, Blazer commands a lot of respect. The boys want to be associated with him and are keen to carry out his wishes. He also is able to get Yemi to seriously reconsider his attitude towards his African heritage. He is intelligent, knowledgeable and emanates a strong, powerful confidence. This ability to connect with a range of people creates a bridge between them. However, there are still hints that Blazer may have a darker side to his character, praising the boys for carrying their knives and arranging to meet them later.

Police Officers 1 and 2

The two white officers both act provocatively towards Yemi, clearly antagonising him and deliberately trying to elicit a negative reaction from him. Their use of accents, the way they talk to each other about Yemi in front of him (with the clear intention for him to hear what they are saying) and the refusal to listen to the truth of the situation is inflammatory. Their behaviour changes when a crowd gather to watch, perhaps acting as a metaphor to show the difference between public perception of some aspects of the authorities and the hidden reality of institutionalised racism.



Context of *Gone Too Far!*

The original performance took place Upstairs at the Royal Court, London in February 2007.

Students are required to refer to the context **in which the text was created and first performed** as part of their response to sub-question (b)(i). This could be the social, political, context and/or the context to the **first performance**, which for this text **took place in London, in 2007**. Contextual information relating to this time period may also be covered in sub-question b(ii) and (c). The following contextual information may be of support to students when preparing for these questions.

Bola Agbaje wrote *Gone Too Far!* as part of the Young Writers programme at the Royal Court and the play was selected for performance as part of the Young Writer Festival in February 2007. It draws upon her own experiences and observations as a young person growing up in a diverse, multicultural environment on estates in London, as well as the experiences of her sisters who had been brought up in Nigeria and then moved to the UK. As families from around the world have become third and fourth generational British, communities have developed new and diverse cultures, amalgamating cultural traditions, yet sometimes resulting in a culture clashes, conflict and difficulties in reconciling traditions and values. These conflicts are explored extensively and often comically within the play.

The play was initially inspired by a real-life newspaper article about a young black girl who had been seriously assaulted in a supermarket toilet, which Agbaje linked to her own memories of growing up in South London. The first performance of the play took place in an intimate performance space on a thrust stage with many naturalistic elements creating a flexible yet realistic design concept for the play, creating a believable South London location, inhabited by realistically costumed characters. The production team adopted a similarly creative yet naturalistic approach to other elements of design.

The original performance took place around the time in the UK when a major shopping centre in the South East of England, backed by the Prime Minister of the time, (Tony Blair) banned shoppers from wearing 'hoodies'. This ban was then supported by the mainstream media who felt there was a wider breakdown in societal and moral values. However, many young people felt victimised by this, leading to a broader debate about the assumptions made regarding young people, with a particular focus for young people of colour.

Another tragic event at this time was the murder of Damilola Taylor, a 10-year-old boy who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, died as a result of a stab wound. Two teenage brothers were later convicted of manslaughter. This was a shocking example of the violent under-current which existed in many areas of urban Britain and which was a part of many young people's lives at this time, particularly young people of colour.



Themes in *Gone Too Far!*

While there is no doubt that racial and cultural identity are major themes in the play, the text also asks broader questions about identity, regardless of race. Almost every character experiences some form of identity confusion, trying to discover who they are or even by consciously denying who they are. Yemi's apparent rejection of his Nigerian heritage is central to his conflict with Ikudayisi, who he considers to be an embarrassment. This conflict of identity manifests itself in several ways, including his discriminatory remarks to the Bangladeshi Shopkeeper. While it becomes clear that Yemi is only trying to make 'a point', it is interesting that someone who may have been a victim of racial discrimination might resort to such tactics themselves. The Shopkeeper also reveals an interesting identity; displaying two cultures merging could be interpreted as a positive amalgamation or as an indication that he feels he cannot truly maintain his own identity but must adapt towards something he is not in order to feel accepted into the community.

Perhaps the biggest struggle with identity can be seen in Armani. Being mixed-race seems to cause Armani conflict, which she expresses as hatred towards Africans. She is fiercely proud of her Jamaican and white roots but is quick to make discriminatory comments towards Yemi and later Paris. While this may be a defensive strategy, it again highlights the cultural and racial divisions within society. Interestingly, the one person who does not seem to experience such conflict is Ikudayisi – someone who has grown up in Nigeria and only just arrived in London. He also is proud of his background but unlike Armani, sees this as something to share and celebrate rather than something which represents difference and division. However, his use of a poor American accent does raise questions as to his motives for speaking in such a way – especially when he speaks Yoruba so often, knowing full well that the majority of people cannot understand him. For many, a native language is a true expression of identity, something which Ikudayisi seems to exemplify perfectly.

Knife crime and violence are also themes that run within the play. Both Razer and Flamer carry knives and it is the first thing they turn to when they are approached by an apparently unknown person. Razer does a similar thing when Yemi begins to accuse him of stealing the trainers from Ikudayisi. However, the reaction of the characters when Ikudayisi is injured demonstrates that these teenagers are not the hardened thugs that they may wish to portray, but frightened individuals. Therefore, perhaps it is more a reflection on their own fears and the feeling of personal security they get from carrying a knife to protect themselves from others. This is again an indication that people feel they cannot be themselves and they need to project a manufactured image. Further clues about the potential for violence in the relationship between Blazer, Flamer and Razer emerge, when Blazer asks the boys to meet him '*up at the frontline*', language which echoes military terms and hinting at a turf war.

The reaction of the Old Lady towards Ikudayisi is an example of judging people and making assumptions. While she may be feeling similar worries to those that lead the teenagers to carry a knife, she assumes that Ikudayisi is trying to mug her. Her reaction is fearful and inaccurate, but it reflects the image many in society have of young people – that they are something to be feared. This attitude is also reflected in the way the Shopkeeper feels about Yemi, highlighting the lack of trust between people and leading to incorrect assumptions which are then projected onto a wider community.



It is impossible to ignore Yemi's treatment at the hands of the two Police Officers. The two white Officers goad and manipulate the situation, refusing to listen to the brothers and antagonising Yemi until his anger grew. His reaction towards the Officers, although understandable, gave them the ammunition they needed to continue to provoke Yemi, only stopping when a crowd gathered to watch. This treatment raises questions regarding institutionalised racism, first highlighted by the Stephen Lawrence case, and still a powerful topic today. In fact, a recent study indicating that over half of young people in custody are from a BAME background, while members of the BAME community are still nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than members of the white community.

Finally, Yemi's acceptance of his Nigerian heritage is a positive end to the play. It demonstrates that, with knowledge and understanding, it is possible and even likely that combining two cultures can lead to an enriched experience and a stronger community based on mutual respect.



Resources for *Gone Too Far!*

There are a wealth of resources available on the Pearson Edexcel website and these are being added to and updated regularly. These resources, including the [Sample Assessment Materials](#), and [specimen paper and mark scheme](#), are free to download.

Past productions page – the Royal Court

[Original production](#)

[Cast information](#)

[Tour information](#)

Articles about *Gone Too Far!*

[British Theatre Guide](#)

[The Guardian](#)

[Institute of Race Relations](#)

[Music OMH](#)

Contextual articles

[The Guardian article on knife amnesty](#)

[The Observer article about hooded tops](#)

[The Guardian article about BAME children in UK custody](#)

Interviews with Bola Agbaje

[The Guardian](#)

[The British Backlist](#)

[Royal Court interview with Simon Stephens](#)

[Interview with writer/ director - film version](#)

[Trailer for the film version of the play – available on YouTube](#)

A film adaptation is also available.



Practical activities to help prepare for Component 3

The following suggested exercises may help students practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *Gone Too Far!*, and to have some practical experience of bringing the text to life. Students must respond to the text as performers, directors and designers, so practical experience of all of these roles will be useful. However, the questions are grouped into two areas:

- activities for performers and for directors of performers
- activities for designers and for directors of production elements.

1. Performers and Directors of Performers: Questions (a)(i), (a)(ii) and (b)(ii)

There are a number of performance elements which will come up across these three questions:


- vocal skills/voice
- physical skills/movement
- non-verbal communication
- stage space and stage directions.

Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each performance element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance, as well as a grasp of how to use these elements as a performer and as a director.

Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the ‘before and after’ life of the play. For example, a useful exercise would be to create a news report where some of the characters are interviewed for the local paper (depending on the chosen performance context) after reporters are ‘tipped off’ about events surrounding Ikudayisi’s injury at the end of the play. Each character will have a different viewpoint on how the situation developed and who was responsible. It is also an opportunity to explore if there is any blame on any other characters and what the relationships between characters are. Alternative periods of time to explore could be exploring how their Mum discovers that Ikudayisi has been wounded or the day when Yemi first learns his brother is coming over from Nigeria.

Past 10 seconds – in this activity, take the characters back in time in stages: 10 seconds before the start of the events of the play, then 10 minutes, then 10 hours. Then take them forward again to show how the established events of the play unfold, perhaps highlighting Yemi internal conflicts and his stubbornness in rejecting his Nigerian heritage. This kind of activity might be particularly useful as students are first exploring the play.

Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation and to explore motive/objective. It would also help students to consider the journey of the character in the context of the complete text. This would work well to develop understanding of improvisation work early on in the process but would also be an excellent practical revision technique for students.



A more theatrical way of exploring hot-seating might be to combine this exercise with an off-text improvisation. For example, take some of the events as described by Blazer – for example, how he was teased for having an accent when he was young and how he dealt with it – then devise work around these events in order to develop an understanding of how he became the person he is now. An alternative maybe to explore how the Old Lady feels, not just on the occasion she encounters Ikudayisi, but more generally in her day-to-day life.

Exploring voice and vocal skills such as volume, pitch, tone, pace, pause, emphasis, accent and dialect can also help performers and directors of performers to consider character choices. How might vocal choices help the audience understand where characters come from? How might they show an understanding of the character at that moment within the play? Does it make a difference if certain words are emphasised in one reading, but different words are emphasised in an alternative reading? Does it help to explore a sequence of lines by placing pauses in different places? What impact might delivering the same line in a whisper or raised volume have on the meaning?

Still image and mime are often highly effective in exploring the use of physical skills, non-verbal communication and the use of space. Students could be given the opportunity to look at relationships and emotions within a given moment from the text by creating either a short sequence of mime or a series of still images. Using facial expression, movement, gesture, posture and their proxemics (or position within the performance space) will enhance their understanding of how these characters might be feeling at this moment, or what they might want to achieve.

There are numerous opportunities within the text to explore physical reactions to the interaction between characters, such as Razer and Armani. For example, while they are a couple, their attraction for each other is juxtaposed by the conflict they experience as Razer becomes tired of hearing Armani complaining. Non-verbal communication may communicate subtext and detail about how Yemi really feels when being told he cannot enter the shop without removing his hood.

Following practical activities, evaluating the ways in which performance skills have been used and asking students to offer reasons for their performance choices verbally after sharing work, will also help students become more confident with the relevant vocabulary.

Rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus is also a helpful activity for students. This focus might be the kind of statement to be found in question (b) (ii) for example, 'Paris is frustrated'. Assigning the role of director to one student within each group and asking the director to verbally justify or give reasons for the choices made when producing the scene, will help all students to grasp the role of the director and to feel more confident about responding on paper to question (b)(ii).

Once students are more confident in working as a director, or with a student director, further explorative activities might be useful.

For example, exploring the use of stage space with the director. The director assigns roles and gives each character a double who feeds lines to the performer, allowing the performers to move around the space without needing to hold a script. The director gives clear suggestions for the use of space and movement to the performers. This could also be applied to vocal and/or physical skills.



2. Designers and Directors of Production Elements: Questions (b)(i) and (c)

There are six production/design elements which will come up across these two questions:

- staging
- set
- props and stage furniture
- costume
- lighting
- sound.

Three of these will be possible options on each question with all six appearing on the paper each year. Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each production/design element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance. A grasp of how the differences in approaching these elements as a director and as a director will also be valuable.

It might be useful to set up a production meeting and pitch for your students. In this model, for example, a small group of five could consist of a director, set, costume, sound and lighting designers. The director then asks important questions to each member of the production team in order to develop a creative concept for a production of the play and then sells a potential 'theatrical' pitch to the teacher (producer or 'dragon' in order to secure funding).

The teacher should support students by ensuring that the students all have a good understanding of the text and of appropriate performance styles for this text. Each member of each production team must justify their ideas by referring to key moments from the play. This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the written examination.

Designers/directors will also need to think about how their chosen performance style will be supported through design and about how design elements will be used to time passing and the increase in tension throughout the play.

Designers/directors will also need to think about how their chosen performance style will be supported through design and about how design elements will be used to symbolise key themes and build tension throughout the play. Creating a model box or stage plan of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene or episode will be played in a potential space, and to choose a specific stage. By creating this visually they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas when writing about set, stage furniture or staging in particular. *Gone Too Far!* was originally staged in a studio theatre. However, students may choose to change the type of staging and approach to set, for example, using symbolic set and stage furniture items to emphasise cultural references, and the changes in location.

Exploring different music and sound effects for key moments is another effective way of considering how sound design can play an important role in the development of a key idea of theme. There are a number of sound cues within the text already and these could be created



live or using recorded sound. Similarly, there are opportunities for music and sound to be used to create atmosphere and/or location, for example, consider the sounds from other flats within the block or sounds from the estate. How might these punctuate the narrative and support moments of tension or revelation? What theatrical impact is created when you explore the use of different sound effects at different volumes? Does music or sound effects underscore key speeches, for example – music from the corner shop or the climactic wounding of Ikudayisi? If students have access to different lighting effects, it might be useful to explore key moments in different lighting states. There are a number of lighting changes and effects within the play text, and these could be created using colour, intensity and specific lighting effects such as gobos and spotlights. Although the play is set primarily in one location (the estate), the lighting state in your interpretation does not have to remain the same, considering more abstract lighting at moments during the play. Different kinds of lantern could be used to create shadows/suspense and to emphasise key themes.

If students do not have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches. There is software available online that will help you to create a virtual set and lighting grid for a production of the play and students could look more broadly at other plays to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is designing potential costumes and props. Research is key and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of ‘designing’. Students do not have to be great artists to create great designs. Students could be asked to link their intentions verbally with the initial production, as they will need to do in question (b)(i), either because they are adopting a similar approach or because they are developing different ideas. Costume designers will need to think about how both the chosen time period, the performance style, cultural considerations and characterisation/status will be supported through the style of the costume for each character.

While the majority of these activities will result in informal sharing within the class, using the set text as the basis for more formal performance work is also worth considering. *Gone Too Far!* is a prohibited text for Component 2. However, students might complete a mock performance from text in year 10 using extracts from their prescribed text. This will not only support performance and design skills; it will also help students to become confident with staging extracts from the play for an audience.