



INTRODUCTION TO FOUR OF SWORDS

Founded by Sarah White & Phil Kingslan John in 2012, **FOUR OF SWORDS** is a

theatre, media & education company based in Exeter. We adapt classic stories into spectacular story installations in unusual locations, such as *JEKYLL & HYDE* in ruinous Poltimore House. We have created eight original shows & performed to 10,000 people.

In his previous life, Phil was a Secondary School teacher of English, Media & Drama. Sarah toured Edinburgh Fringe & directed a string of indie hits. Together we have built a diverse portfolio of collaborations with schools, universities, examination boards & arts centres across the UK & beyond.

Pearson & Four of Swords present **USING DRAMA & MEDIA TO TEACH THE GOTHIC!**

compiled by **Philip Kingslan John**

Drama activities can obviously benefit kinaesthetic learners as well as the class “natural performers”. Media activities harness this generation's natural aptitude for screen literacy, & it can be deeply rewarding to capture performances on video and then review them together. This might even facilitate the production of content for a class/department Youtube channel...?

This document will be using examples from *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* & *A Christmas Carol*. Given the requirements of the Literature Spec., it has been organised into the following sections:

PART 1) GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GOTHIC LANGUAGE

PART 2) EXAMINING FORM & STRUCTURE

PART 3) CONTEXT & RESEARCH

PART 4) CHARACTERISATION

PART 1) GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GOTHIC LANGUAGE

Gothic language can be intimidating to students, mainly because of its long, elaborate sentences & unwieldy passages of description.

SLANGTASTIC TRANSLATION! Pairs or small groups

Translate a passage from your set text into a modern vernacular. Use as many amusing slang words as possible, whether that means a mock grimy hip hop flow, or humorous local dialect!

EXAMPLE

...she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. [...] The moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. [...] And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman.

[from *Jekyll & Hyde*]

she clocked this Poppa Crimbo. To be fair, he looked alright. Someone else was there, like Dobby the elf, some short-arse, but she didn't see him proper. Crimbo geezer, super-polite. Two got chatting. Girl was watching. Crimbo in the moonlight, dapper shnapper.

She noticed the other dude. She knew him! Mister Hyde, some proper scary road man. He lost it. He went schiz! Literally buzzing, waving his stick & stamping. He kicked right off.

OUTCOME & EXTENSIONS

Students should perform their translations. If students are shy & retiring then, teachers, perform their work for them! There is always cringe-humour to be had from hearing your teacher attempt to speak cool.

Groups of 4

ADAPTING INTO A SCRIPT

- Adapting a scene from your set novel into a play script.
- Translate all of the flowery description into functional stage directions.
- Simplify & streamline the dialogue. The emphasis is on editing the source text down: not slavishly transcribing lines of dialogue but re-phrasing, condensing & simplifying.
- Maybe there should be extra limitations... only being allowed four lines of dialogue per scene, for example?
- See our example on the next page!

“You don’t believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don’t,” said Scrooge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don’t know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre’s voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre’s being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

“You see this toothpick?” said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision’s stony gaze from himself.

“I do,” replied the Ghost.

“You are not looking at it,” said Scrooge.

“But I see it,” said the Ghost, “notwithstanding.”

“Well!” returned Scrooge, “I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you! humbug!”

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

“Mercy!” he said. “Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”

“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “I must.”

Ghost: “You don't believe in me, but here I am. Why do you doubt your senses?”

Scrooge: “Because... because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blob of mustard or a crumb of cheese. There's more of gravy than of grave about you!”

Scrooge seems to be trying to distract himself, to hide his own fear from himself. He holds up a toothpick.

carry on from here!

OUTCOME & EXTENSIONS

The scenes should be performed. Furthermore, if the class can be split into groups of four or five, & each group is given a different key scene from the novel, the scenes can be performed (or filmed!) in sequence as a story summary.

If at all possible, it really is brilliant to film students' work. Then it can then be enjoyed afterwards when the students aren't distracted by doing something else (i.e. performing).

The key to filming is to keep it as simple as possible. For example, have the camera in the middle of a room, either on a tripod or just a camera phone held up. Each group is arranged in sequence around the camera, set up ready to go.

Film everyone's performance in one take. As one group ends, the camera pans & the next group begins. You could get creative with recurrent props signifying the same character played by different students. (Anyone who needs to stay out of shot keeps moving behind the camera.) That way, there is only a single video file to worry about & it can be watched back almost immediately.

RECREATED-REVERSE-TRANSLATED Individual or pair work

Having learned to penetrate the complexities of Gothic language, let's try our hand at conjuring some Gothic complexity of our own.

- First, the whole class works together to create a checklist of the key qualities of
 - Gothic writing in general
 - Dickens' or Stevenson's unique style
- For each quality on the list consider "What is the effect of this?"
- Working on their own or in pairs, students compose their own Gothic-style texts.
- Example tasks include:
 - Translate a modern text into Gothic language. This could be something silly, like a tabloid news article, or more serious, like a paragraph about poverty in Victorian London.
 - Use a visual prompt. This could be a photo or an image from the Victorian era, or it could be something completely incongruous.
 - Stevenson's first draft of J&H was destroyed. Write a scene that was cut from the first draft... why was it cut? Was it too horrific or sensational?
 - Write a short review of your set text for a Victorian magazine. Why not condemn it as hopelessly rubbish, with no chance whatsoever of ever becoming a 'classic'!
- Work should be swopped and peer assessed against the Gothic checklist to find the best Gothic writers of the class.



PART 2) EXAMINING FORM & STRUCTURE

THE ELEVATOR PITCH ADAPTATION CHALLENGE!

Groups of 4 or 5

Adaptation is a brilliant way of making students think what it is about the original text that makes it powerful, & makes it work, & how this might be reinvented by placing the story in different contexts.

- Watch some trailers or clips from examples of classic stories adapted into different genres. e.g. *Scrooged*, Disney's *Treasure Planet*, *Lion King* as *Hamlet* & *A Bug's Life* as *The Seven Samurai*!
- Introduce the concept of an “elevator pitch”: i.e. pitch your idea as quickly & compellingly as poss!
- Each group is given a different suggested genre & asked to develop a pitch for an adaptation of your set text in that genre (although groups should be free to pitch their own unique visions if they wish.)
- Each group pitches their idea to the teacher, who is in character as a Hollywood bigwig. Each group has a severe time limit, like thirty seconds per pitch. Afterwards, the teacher grills the group on the reasons behind their choices.

OUTCOME & EXTENSIONS

After the students perform their pitches, you might debate which adaptation served the original story best, & why.

SOCIAL MEDIA RE-TELLING

Individual or pair work

I saw this idea on a History website & knew it could work brilliantly for literature.

- Choose your favourite Social Media platform (or make up your own) & create a timeline for your set text!
- This example (see it more clearly on the next page) is a Facebook -style timeline for *Jekyll & Hyde*.

This activity could produce some great


OUTCOME & EXTENSIONS

display work. There is even the opportunity of a joint project with ICT or Design.

It also raises the following points:

- How does the ability to share & send documents reflect the epistolary nature of *Jekyll & Hyde*?
- What does a chronological timeline show us about the order of events as they are revealed in *A Christmas Carol* or *J&H*?

SOCIAL MEDIA RE-TELLING EXAMPLE: J&H FACEBOOK




Gabriel John Utterson
@GJUtterson


- Home
- About
- Notes
- Email Signup
- Photos
- Reviews
- Videos
- Likes
- Posts

Create a Page


FriendsMessageMore



**HAPPY FRIENDIVERSARY!**

Gabriel John Utterson has been friends with Hastie Lanyon & Henry Jekyll for 35 years!





LikeCommentShare

Write a comment...

**GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON likes PLYMOUTH GIN.**


LikedCommentShare


Write a comment...


**RICHARD ENFIELD tagged GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON in a post.**

Lovely stroll thru the misty backstreets with my boy Gabriel John Utterson.


LikedCommentShare

Gabriel John Utterson – Lovely to catch up. Although I must say I've been a bit creeped out by that story you told me.


Richard Enfield – I thought we agreed never to mention that again?!


**HENRY JEKYLL shared an article from TRANSCENDENTAL MEDICINE.**


I'm honoured to be featured in this month's magazine.



LikeCommentShare


Hastie Lanyon – Unscientific balderdash!


Henry Jekyll – Keep your pedantic opinions to yourself.

**EDWARD HYDE sent GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON a friend request.**


1 mutual friend – Henry Jekyll.

Ignore?Accept?

Edward Hyde – After bumping into you the other night, I thought 'tis well we should be friends on facebook. You know, just in case.

**GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON was at an event: DRINKIES FOR OLD CRONIES – hosted by HENRY JEKYLL.**


Liked by GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON & 5 othersCommentShare


Henry Jekyll – Thanks for coming everyone. I cherish for you all a warm and rich affection!


Contact

Lawyer • London, United Kingdom
4.7 ★★★★★

Search for posts on this Page

306 people like this
Henry Jekyll and 3 other friends

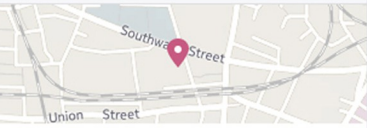
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Henry Jekyll

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4.7 ★

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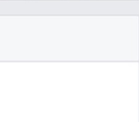
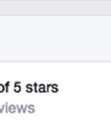
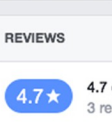









ABOUT



Southwark Street
Union Street

Gaunt Street
London


PHOTOS




REVIEWS

4.7 ★


4.7 of 5 stars
3 reviews

Henry Jekyll
5★

LikeComment

Hastie Lanyon
5★

LikeComment

Richard Enfield
5★

LikeComment

6

PART 3) CONTEXT & RESEARCH

Just a quick couple of ideas here, mainly media-related.

CREATE A SOUNDSCAPE

Small groups

- Create & record a soundscape for one or more locations in the novel!
(Recording can easily be done on a mobile phone.)
- Limit your soundscape to 5 sounds per location.
- What sounds will you choose & why?
Research Victorian London to give you ideas.
- Still stuck? Why not try: horses' hooves,
people selling stuff, a newspaper boy,
someone selling The Strand magazine, Big Ben,
people begging, people speaking different languages,
sounds of the docklands, pigeons!



OUTCOME & EXTENSIONS

Students record & share their rigorously researched Victorian London soundscapes.

Focus on doing more than one location per novel, & really draw out the differences.

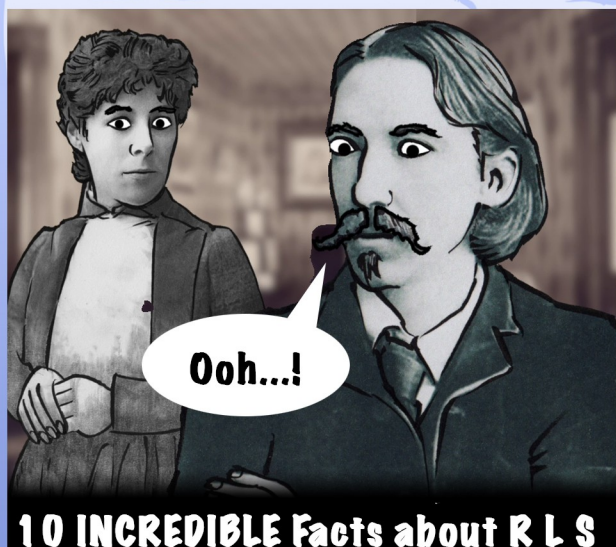
For example: Soho where Hyde's lodgings are, compared with the neighbourhood of Jekyll's House, Gaunt Street or Cavendish Square. Equally, in A Christmas Carol, the loneliness of the graveyard compared with the festive buzz on the streets.

The recordings can be used as backing tracks for some of the performance tasks!

MAKE A YOUTUBE-STYLE "LIST" VIDEO

Working in pairs

There are whole Youtube channels dedicated to lists of things, such as "10 Things You Never Knew About Captain America", "5 Reasons Why Aliens Exist", or "Top 7 Songs of the 21st Century". For more examples, see channels TopTenz, Whatculture & Watch Mojo.



- Choose a title for your own "List" video.
- You can use a general title like "10 Things You Never Knew About Victorian London", or something more specialist, such as "7 Gruesome Facts About Proto-Psychology in the Nineteenth Century"!
- Research & select your facts. Write them into a list in order of amazingness!
- Write a video script which goes through each fact & explains it.
- Go through your facts in reverse order!
- Perform your video script. Have fun coming up with a name for the Youtube channel & a personality for the presenter.

PART 4) CHARACTERISATION

Here are a couple of ways to glorify that old drama favourite: “hot-seating”. In order to make things useful, really encourage students to bring out the differences between public & private personas.

THE CHAT SHOW CHALLENGE!

Let's imagine that characters from *Jekyll & Hyde* or *A Christmas Carol* are appearing on a chat show, something like Graham Norton or Jeremy Kyle.

Groups of 4 or 5



- Decide at what point during the story you want to interview the characters.
- Come up with a name for your chat show & a title for the episode. Something like “My best friend’s going to the devil, but what can I do?”
- Decide who will be presenter. What personality will the presenter have? It could be Jeremy Kyle himself, a character from the novel or an original creation...
- Which characters will you feature as guests? What order will you bring them out on stage?
- Each group should work together on coming up with the questions. It is not the sole responsibility of “the host” to do this! Some should be serious questions about the characters & their motivations in the novel. Some of the questions can be silly or humorous.
- Use or subvert as many conventions of the Jeremy Kyle-style chat show format as possible. For example:
 - Have the guests arrive on stage one at a time & react to each other as they appear.
 - Have the guests move chairs & refuse to sit next to each other.
 - Have one of the guests as a “surprise guest” that the others aren’t ready for.
 - At the most dramatic point, bring out some lie detector results from a test taken before the show started & which reveals something interesting about one or more of the characters!
- Perform your chat show skits!

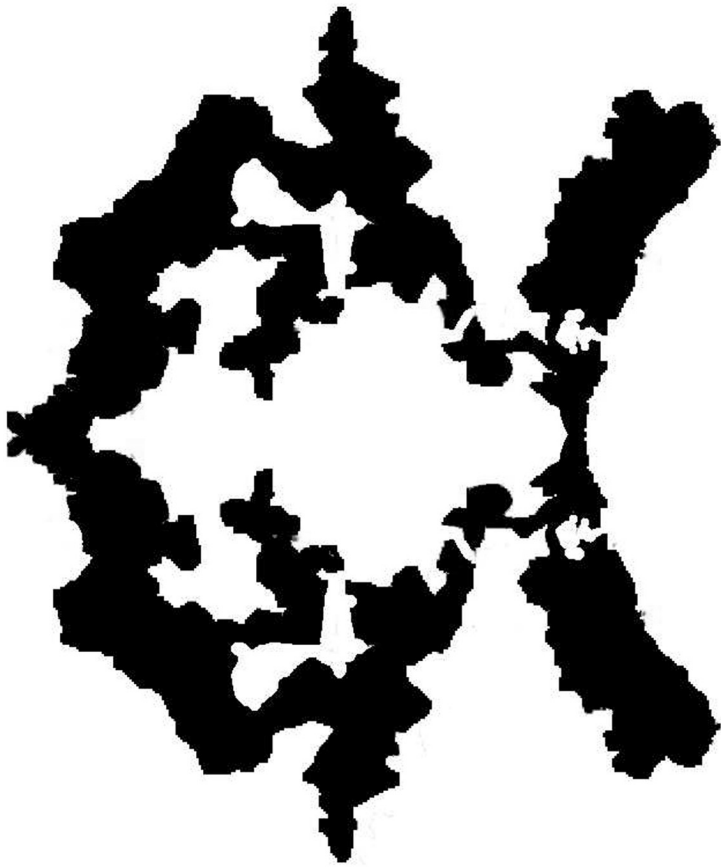
THE PSYCHIATRIST’S COUCH

Working in pairs

- Another idea for exploring character is to script and perform (or improvise) a “psychiatrist’s couch” interview.
- Again, use the format to explore the difference between what a character projects & what he or she really thinks or feels.
- The psychiatrist should perform a Rorschach test on the character: showing inkblots which suggest images to the viewer’s subconscious. There is a series of inkblots you can use in this pack!



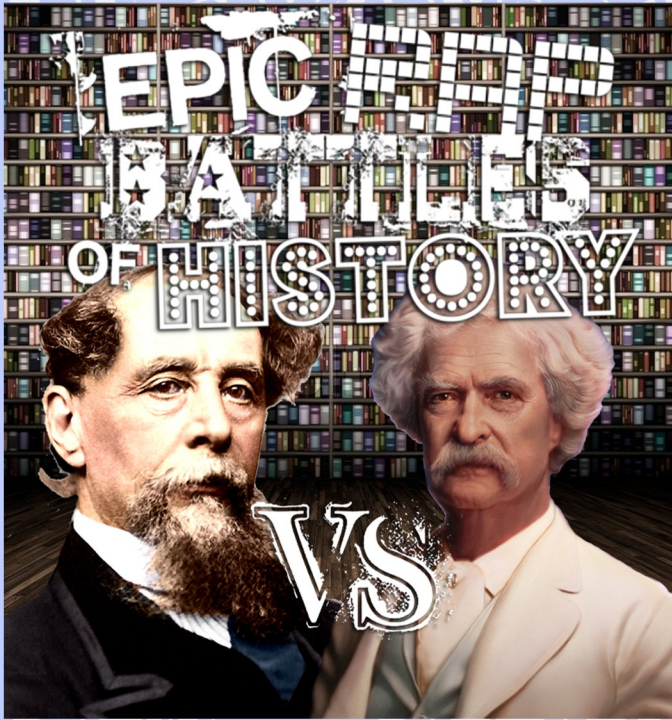
INKBLOTS FOR USE WITH RORSCHACH TEST



Working in pairs

EPIC RAP BATTLES OF LITERATURE!

All stories feature conflict between characters. What better way to dissect that antagonism & bring it to life than to write & perform some savage battle raps?!



- “EPIC RAP BATTLES OF HISTORY” on Youtube is great for inspiration, but with dubious language at times. Search “CLEAN” Epic Rap Battles for versions without the rude words.
- Make it clear at the start that, despite the bad language in rap music, all the words & phrases used in this activity must be “appropriate”.
- Students should choose two characters from their set text to battle. Make sure there’s a good meaty conflict to be had!
- The standard format is two verses each, taken in turns. When planning/writing, students should work together on both characters’ verses so the lyrics are as well constructed as possible.
- Make as many concrete links between the rap verses & the source text as possible. Include quotations & direct references.

- Use the writing scaffold provided in this pack to help students write their raps.

OUTCOME

Students should perform their work. There are lots of “backing tracks” available online. Lay down some phat beats for your students!

CONCLUSION

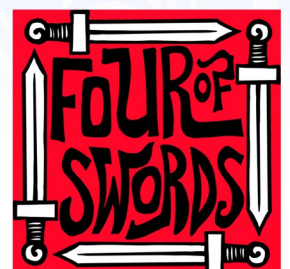
Thank you to Pearson for giving us this opportunity to get our stuff out there. It’s always a great pleasure to connect with English teachers, and especially to receive feedback on our work, so if you try any of these activities in your classroom, let us know how it goes!

In summary, our attitude to teaching the Gothic novel is to engage students’ imaginations at all costs. Celebrate the text! Any kind of performance or filming really makes “an event” of the lesson, especially when you can collapse classes & perform for each other. Alternatively, get in a theatre company... hint hint!

Thank you, & we hope you find these resources useful.



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see www.four-of-swords.com for more information
contact sarah@four-of-swords.com phil@four-of-swords.com



EPIC RAP BATTLES OF LITERATURE WORKSHEET

(Character 1)	versus	(Character 2)
---------------	---------------	---------------

Write down your ideas here for general points of conflict between the two characters
(based directly on points on the novel)

Every good rap battle needs some insults – write three insults for each character to use
against the other *based on how he/she is described or behaves in the novel*

Now you're ready to write your rap!

Character 1 Verse 1	Character 2 Verse 1
Character 1 Verse 2	Character 2 Verse 2