

**JAMILA GAVIN'S**

# **Coram Boy**

based on the novel by **Jamila Gavin**

Adapted by **Helen Edmundson**

## **Scheme of work and teaching resources**

**Paul Bunyan and Ruth Moore**

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# *Coram Boy* Scheme of Work

## Using Drama to develop an analytical approach to the play, *Coram Boy*

### **Introduction**

#### **Teaching and learning in this guide**

The activities and approaches outlined below show how, through drama, students come to a greater understanding of the textual features and dramatic structures in *Coram Boy*. They explore the writing process, style and writer's technique as well as the thematic, content-based issues and ideas. Students develop their analytical skills as well as the capacity to apply this critical thinking to other texts, ideas or issues.

The participatory nature of the activities, and the critical thinking developed, demand that students explore and respond to the play both in relation to its staging and performance, as well as in relation to the original Jamila Gavin novel from which it has been adapted. Exploring and analysing the adaptation process allows students to examine the decisions, techniques and imagination required to move them from prose to script and from page to stage.

In the same way that pupils learn to analyse media productions through the creation of their own media products, their analysis of scripts and performances is developed through the use of role and drama conventions. Creating, developing and sustaining roles, and the practical exploration of how gesture, sound, language, direction and structure affect the audience's understanding, encourage pupils to read for meaning. They come to see scripts not as written texts but as plans for performance where actors, directors and performance elements have an effect on meaning.

*NATE Drama Packs introduction*

#### **Activities and approaches**

The activities comprising the scheme of work described here are included at the back of the student book. It is intended that, rather than working independently, students will collaborate in pairs and groups throughout under the guidance of the teacher. It is important that students are aware of their own learning process and understand the aims and objectives of each session. The student book addresses the students directly. Each activity begins by listing the learning outcomes so that the students are conscious of the skills they are trying to develop and can see the 'bigger picture'. The teacher should share and discuss this with them and refer to it throughout the work. Each activity concludes with questions to encourage the students to evaluate their own learning and appraise the development of their skills. Teachers can choose to approach these questions through class discussion, pair or group work or written responses, as appropriate. Recording the teacher's and students' thinking will help to inform the work and written responses as they develop.

## Helping pupils see the ‘bigger picture’

As teachers, we are acutely aware of where we are leading pupils and the intended end result of our teaching, but how often do we convey these intentions to our pupils? This understanding of the ‘bigger picture’ is important for all pupils... It is helpful to be able to see the ‘bigger picture’ into which their current learning fits and to be able to locate the current lesson in the scheme of work.

*Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools,*  
Unit 4 Lesson design for inclusion (DfES, 2004)

## Teaching and learning commentary

The various approaches to texts, from the use of drama conventions to the more formal essay writing, should complement each other so that the students (and the teacher) can make clear links between them. The practical work leads to a more detailed analysis and understanding of the play and the adaptation process. The written work is very much informed by the earlier practical work and analysis. The ‘Role on the Stained Glass Angel’, described in Activity 3, can be used throughout the work to record student ideas and teacher/student thinking and responses. This provides a useful prompt and recap tool at the beginning of a session as well as providing a valuable resource for written responses to the text.

## Resources

| Supplied   | Not supplied                            |
|--|---|
| The play of <i>Coram Boy</i>   | Projector                               |
| Photographs of an angel stained glass window and of Gloucester Cathedral | Appropriate music                       |
| Photographs of the performance at the National Theatre                   | CD player                               |
|  | CDs of the audio recording of the novel |
|  | Plain paper and pens                    |
|  | The novel of <i>Coram Boy</i>           |

## Planning

The planned scheme of work offered here provides a structure which enables students to build their learning and understanding. Using activities or conventions in isolation would not allow for the in-depth approach to learning that is required. A structured and layered approach, which is carefully planned by the teacher and understood by the pupils, is needed therefore to ensure progression and the development of high-level skills. Time, space, resources and equipment will need to be well managed.

When teachers and students become confident with the approach, more detailed planning takes place where additional scenes, themes and techniques are explored in a similar way. The students are then able to become more independent in their own learning and can plan their own approach to the text, selecting their own scenes and identifying the learning outcomes that are required. The scheme of work should therefore be seen as a structured framework, which pupils can add to, adapt and develop. Although the approaches are related to specific scenes and aspects of the play, the conventions and techniques can clearly be used in relation to other aspects of the play and/or other texts.

## **Preparing for performance**

From the initial planning to the final staging and performance of the play, the activities described can become an important part of the performance process. Observing actors in the group activities will often provide more information about their potential as performers and their understanding of character, techniques and approach than a formal audition.

Using the scheme of work as part of the process from rehearsal and development through to performance:

- develops understanding of drama conventions and staging
- enables detailed analysis of the ways in which action, character, atmosphere and tension are conveyed.

# Activity 1: What do children need?

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Ask the students to sit in a large circle. In the centre of the circle you will have placed a number of objects surrounding a wicker (Moses) basket – e.g. a shawl, a candle, ribbons and pictures. Give each student a word printed on a card, such as ‘poor’, ‘of’ or ‘citizens’ taken from lines 19–21, Act Two, Scene 9 (page 107):

*The way a nation treats its poor and unfortunate citizens, most especially its children is a mark of how civilised it truly is.*

- 2 Ask the students to read out all the words around the circle, thinking carefully about what order the words might go in, in order for them to make sense as one quotation. Through discussion and negotiation, ask them to try to re-position the words around the circle so that they can be read out in what they think is the ‘correct’ order.
- 3 Ask the students to read out the words again in their chosen positions. Discuss as a class what they think the quotation means and why it might be important when studying the play.
- 4 Ask the students to choose another word in the circle that they think connects with theirs. This might be a word that helps to give emphasis to the word, such as ‘is’ or ‘its’, or it might be a word that they feel links with theirs in some way, such as ‘children’ or ‘society’. Ask the students to pair up with the person who has that word, sitting next to them but remaining in the large circle. Explain that if they find their first choice has been taken by another student, then they should select the next best word to pair with theirs.
- 5 Ask the students, in pairs, to choose one of the objects from the centre of the circle that they think provides some meaning to the words they have selected.
- 6 Sit in the centre of the circle with the Moses basket. Ask the students to bring the objects out to you, in role as the character with the basket. As they do so, a pair at a time, they should complete the phrase ‘Children need ...’, saying it out loud as they present their object to the character in whichever way they feel is appropriate. Play appropriate music to create the desired mood or period while everyone in the circle completes this task.

## Activity 1: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- question what children need most
- develop their understanding of society in the play
- develop their understanding of symbolism and props in the play
- listen to, organise and present ideas.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

The objects and quotation become significant as the work on the play continues. This activity should take place before beginning the play.

To make the activity easier, you could keep the words in the correct order around the circle but ask students where the sentence begins and ends.

You will also want the students to consider the significance of the objects. If they are unfamiliar with the term ‘symbolism’, then it would be useful to introduce it here by talking about what the objects might represent symbolically.

You might need to model this first by showing the students how you would decide to link two words.

Again, you might need to model this and talk about how objects can take on a symbolic, rather than a literal, meaning.

An understanding of the context-setting process and the use of music is being developed which can then be transferred to an analysis of the staging of the play. You do not need to define a particular character at this stage. Instead, after the activity, ask the students what sort of person the character might be.

## Activity 2: Setting the context and exploring the setting

### Activities and approaches

- 1 As a class, look at the pictures of Gloucester Cathedral. Discuss what sort of place it is.
- 2 Place around the room various objects that might be found in Gloucester Cathedral. These will include a picture of an angel, a crucifix and pictures of stained glass windows.
- 3 Ask students to identify what they can see in the pictures. What sort of place is it? What significance might each object/picture have?
- 4 Explain that in groups of four, students will use the Overheard Conversation convention to explore the place and the objects found in it. To do this they will need to imagine they are visitors to the cathedral, exploring it for the first time. As they move around the space, as if within the walls of the cathedral, and approach each object, they will comment on what they see and hear, have a conversation about the place they are in, or ask each other questions. However, the conversation and movement can only begin once it is being 'overheard' by the character that you adopt. You will move around the space, approaching a group at a time. Once you approach a group, they will know that they can come to life, move and talk, as the conversation is being 'overheard', but once you move away they must stop and become silent again.
- 5 Ask the groups of students to move into a space next to a picture. Give them some time to rehearse the conversation in groups before you adopt the role. Use narration adapted from Act One, Scene 1 (page 7) before the process begins:

*My name is Meshak Gardiner. I am fourteen years old, strange-faced, large-limbed, tattered and hungry. As I enter the cathedral, I look about nervously and listen. At the other end the choirboys are practising. I begin my journey down the south aisle. I feel like I shouldn't be here, but I have just enough courage left to move forward, past the gargoyles ...*

### Activity 2: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- analyse pictures
- investigate, in role, the context and setting of the play
- describe and explain accurately
- listen to and select information.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

It is helpful to project the pictures, as this allows students to focus on what is being said about them. The amount of information you will need to provide will depend on their experience and understanding of such places.

You might want to include additional pieces of text to accompany the pictures if you feel the objects need further explanation.

Encourage the students to make links with the ideas they developed during Activity 1 and the importance of symbolism.

You might need to model the sorts of conversations students would be having in relation to particular objects.

When you begin to move around the room, select your first group carefully by choosing a group you know will model the conversation effectively.



### Activities and approaches (Activity 2 cont.)

As you walk, in role, towards a group, students will begin their Overheard Conversation. In between listening to the different groups of people, you should add further narration adapted once again from Act One, Scene 1 (pages 7–8):

**Extract 1:** *A sudden loud burst of playing on the organ sends me scuttling for cover behind a stone pillar, but as soon as it stops I emerge again and continue.*

**Extract 2:** *I am almost there now. I can see her – my angel. I feel she is calling to me, whispering my name – ‘Meshak’. She is tucked away in a side chapel, inconspicuous, but to me she is a beacon – the most beautiful thing I have ever seen or could possibly imagine. I reach her and stare up at her – the sculpture with glowing auburn hair, the bluest eyes and the kindest expression.*

- 6 Once all the conversations have been heard, ask everyone to freeze and read the following projected text, which has been adapted from Act One, Scene 1 (page 12):

*The music washes over me. I stand in front of the angel and begin to sing a phrase I have just heard from the choirboy’s solo. Suddenly behind me a choirboy appears and sings the same phrase. I look round, terrified at having been caught. The boy stares at me. For a moment there is a strange sense of sameness and recognition between us.*

### Teaching and learning outcomes

It is important that your narration is timed appropriately to fit with the different pictures situated around the room. The overheard conversations need to remain quite short so that the activity does not become too drawn out.

By reading the text to the students in the first instance, you can model the delivery to them and stress particular words and meanings. It is helpful to project the text onto a screen, as this allows students to focus on what is being said. The idea of ‘wrapping text around’ students and modelling the reading process is a feature of the activities.

# Activity 3: Exploring the characters of Meshak and Alexander

## Activities and approaches

- 1 As a class, read the extracts that you used to narrate the journey around the cathedral.
- 2 Project the large stained-glass image of the angel or have a large picture that students are able to see. Ask the students to sit in a large semi-circle facing the image of the angel.
- 3 Use the Role on the Object convention to explore the character of Meshak. To do this, you need to ask the students to identify from the narration/extracts what they know and choose a word they feel best describes him. Write the word on a piece of card and give it to the students. They then put the selected word onto the image of the angel, thinking carefully about where they might place the word according to the colour beneath it.
- 4 Repeat the exercise to explore the character of Alexander.

## Activity 3: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- investigate the characters of Meshak and Alexander
- select appropriate information
- organise and present ideas.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

If you ask the students to read the extracts with you, it is important that you choose the appropriate students so that modelling of the reading continues.

By encouraging the students to identify specific words, you are asking them to think about the particular words and the effect they can have, as well considering how colour can be used symbolically.

This Role on the Object will be referred to throughout the work by adding words and discussing previous choices at different stages in the play. Responses, ideas and comments about the play as a whole can also be recorded on the image, in the same way that is described for Task 1. This provides a useful prompt and recap tool at the beginning of each session and a valuable resource for written responses to the text.

# Activity 4: Investigating the play: meeting the Coram Man

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Divide the class into groups of between three to five students and give each group an extract from Act One, Scene 5 of the play (see below).

**Extract 1:** lines 1–18 from Act One, Scene 5 (page 20)

*from* MRS LYNCH      Where have you been?

*to*    OTIS              Oh I'm ready.

**Extract 2:** stage instruction following line 18 to line 35, Act One, Scene 5 (pages 20–22)

*from*                      They enter the room ...

*to*    MISS PRICE      Tell me please ... tell me about Thomas Coram.

**Extract 3:** lines 36–64, Act One, Scene 5 (pages 22–23)

*from* OTIS              Thomas Coram? Oh, he's a kind and gentle man ...

*to*    OTIS              By the kindest of women. Women who know about babies.

**Extract 4:** lines 65–78, Act One, Scene 5 (page 23)

*from* MRS LYNCH      Then when they're old enough, they are taken to live at the hospital.

*to*    MISS PRICE      Her name is Mercy.

**Extract 5:** stage instruction following line 79 to line 80, Act One, Scene 5 (page 23)

*from*                      There is a long pause.

*to*    MRS LYNCH      Can you be sure that Coram will take the child?

## Activity 4: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop the use of space, facial expression, gesture and tone
- investigate and analyse the script
- question critically the ideas and issues introduced at this stage of the play.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

By exploring these extracts, the students begin to select and sort the relevant information. They also begin to take a real interest in the material and want to know more. By Action Reading the extracts, they have to consider some of the initial issues that directors and actors need to address.

### Activities and approaches (Activity 4 cont.)

**Extract 6:** lines 104–116, Act One, Scene 5 (pages 24–25)

*from* OTIS                      I understand, Miss.

*to*     OTIS                      On my son's life, I swear it.

- 2** Ask students to produce a short Digital Video Clip of this extract.

They begin with a Still Image followed by an Action Reading of the script, then Freeze at the end in a final Still Image. To do this students will need to investigate the script and search for clues about the characters, story and setting.

- 3** Produce this as Rolling Theatre. Use music (Handel's 'Foundling Hospital Anthem'), to guide students.
- All groups freeze in their initial Still Image.
  - The first group unfreezes, adds the action, then freezes again.
  - When they freeze, the next group knows that they can begin.

This continues with all the groups producing their Digital Video Clip until all groups have shown their pieces.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

After a couple of minutes stop the students and ask them to show you their first Still Images by counting them down from 5 to 1, then saying 'Freeze'. Once they have all frozen, ask them to sharpen the pictures to show the tension that exists. This approach can be repeated later to get them to develop their final Still Images.

You will need to explain the process to the students, emphasising the need for them to remain in their frozen positions. Explain that when they are not presenting their Digital Video Clip, they can become Spect-actors. This means that while their bodies remain frozen in the Still Image, their heads can turn to follow the action so that they can see and hear the work of other groups. They should remain in their places, in order for all the groups to freeze in their final Still Image at the end.

# Activity 5: Exploring tension: fact meets fiction at the orphanage

## Activities and approaches

1 As a class, explore the historical information, pictures and artefacts relating to Coram Hospital and Sir Thomas Coram by visiting [www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk) and [www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/foundling\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/foundling_01.shtml).

2 Divide the class into groups of between three and five students. Give each group an extract from Chapter 6 of the novel of *Coram Boy*, which describes the people of the parish gathering at Ashbrook House to discuss the poor of the parish and the problems with the orphanage. These extracts should come from line 9, page 77 to line 24, page 80.

*from* There is more pressure than ever on the almshouses and the orphanage. Somehow, no matter what they did, the poor never seemed to get fewer.

*to* Years ago, it was they who had instigated a fund to support the parish orphanage which, at that time, had descended to being not much more than a dying house.

3 Adopt the role of Mr Claymore and chair a meeting. Arrange the seating to suggest the space where the meeting will take place. In role as Mr Claymore explain the purpose of the gathering. Begin the meeting by reading aloud the following extract adapted from the novel, Chapter 6 (page 77):

*We are gathering here today at Ashbrook Hall to discuss the poor of the parish and the orphanage in particular, something which I know is a great concern of Lady Ashbrook's. There is more pressure than ever on the almshouses and the orphanage. No matter what we do, the poor never get fewer. Their presence is everywhere, not just on the streets of the city but in the countryside. We need to decide what we are going to do about it.*

Ask the students to use the extract and information gained to provide arguments that they will put to the meeting. Give each group a particular position which will influence the argument they need to develop.

## Activity 5: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the historical context and issues in the play
- investigate and analyse the script, selecting relevant information and explore the ideas presented
- present an argument effectively, using evidence to support their ideas.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

You will need to select information which you feel is appropriate for your class. However, students do need to have some understanding of the historical context and be able to explore some of the attitudes and ideas that might have been expressed at the time.

The extract is divided up according to the number of groups available and is therefore dependant on the size of the class.

Depending on the particular extract the group has, you will decide whether they need to present arguments in favour of helping the children and what their particular stance will be. They will need time to explore the extract, prepare their arguments and consider the roles they will adopt at the meeting.

You will need to chair the meeting by provoking responses and arguments and encouraging people to speak either individually or on behalf of a group.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 5 cont.)

- 4 Using the Meeting Convention, ask the students to contribute their ideas and arguments, using the evidence they have found, both from the historical material and the novel.
- 5 After you have drawn the meeting to a close, read out Gaddarn's words from lines 19–23, Act Two, Scene 9 (page 107), which was the text you introduced at the very beginning of the workshop. You could also project the text onto a wall.

GADDARN      The way a nation treats its poor and unfortunate citizens, most especially its children, is a mark of how civilised it truly is. And I say, looking about me this afternoon, England is civilised indeed!

## Teaching and learning outcomes

Remind the students that they will need to listen carefully to the views of others and decide how they can best present their case.

## Activity 6: Visiting the orphanage: the missing scene

### Activities and approaches

- 1 Gather the students into a large semi-circle. Read the following extract from Chapter 6 (pages 80–84) of the novel, which describes Lady Ashbrook's visit to the orphanage. This scene is not included in the play.  
*from* Barely a week had gone by ...  
*to* ... there is nothing more to be done here.
- 2 Divide the class into groups of between three and five students and give each group a section of the extract you have just read aloud. Ask students to choose a line from their section of the extract which they feel is the most important and illustrates the tension that is created (either in the character's own head or in the scene) by Lady Ashbrook's visit. Ask each group to produce a Still Image to illustrate the line they have chosen and write out the line on a large sheet of paper in front of their Image.
- 3 The students need to think about how the line might be said while the Still Image is being held. Will they say it as a group? Use echo? Whisper? Say it individually? What tone will they use?
- 4 Ask all the groups around the room to hold their Still Images and take it in turn to say their lines, producing a tableau of the most significant aspects of the visit.
- 5 Discuss as a class why you think the playwright chose to not include this scene.

### Activity 6: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop analytical skills
- investigate the motivation and thoughts of particular characters
- develop their understanding of the writer's and playwright's techniques and intentions.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

The audio recording could be used here and enables the reading to be modelled effectively for the students. As well as the projected text, you will need individual copies of the extracts for students to work on and refer to.

This section enables the students to begin to explore and analyse the adaptation process, as well as consider the different aims and techniques of the writer, playwright and director. It is important, therefore, that the work begins with the original written text. You will need to be familiar with the way the novel has been adapted for the stage.

Although this extract has been chosen deliberately to explore the tension that exists, the approaches can be used on other scenes from the novel/play.

You might want to discuss how this whole scene might be adapted for the stage and, if time permits, ask the students to write and perform the script of this scene.

## Activity 7: Lady Ashbrook's conscience

### Activities and approaches

Gather students into a large semi-circle. Read the following extract from Chapter 6 (page 84) while projecting it onto a large screen.

*As they rode swiftly away, they noticed a couple of thin young boys gathering firewood in the copse. Their bones stuck out through their thin shirts and one coughed all the time ... Perhaps, since giving birth to her own children, she had become more aware of the welfare of the young.*

- 1 Ask the students to stand in two parallel lines, facing each other down the length of the room. The Conscience Alley convention will be used to explore Lady Ashcroft's responses at this point. You need to stand in between these lines at one end of the room looking down the lines.
- 2 Adopt the role of Lady Ashbrook. As she walks between the two lines, she will hear her conscience speaking to her. One line of students will speak the thoughts of Lady Ashbrook as a mother; the other will speak her thoughts as the wife of a wealthy landowner. Tell the students which line should adopt which role.
- 3 As you become level with the students, they will speak your (Lady Ashbrook's) thoughts, thinking carefully about the text they have just explored and what they feel are the character's motivations. They should speak in first person to narrate her thoughts.

### Activity 7: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the tension in the play
- make reasoned judgements, and organise and present their ideas
- investigate and analyse the text to identify the character's thoughts and motivation.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

It is important that before you begin the students are given an opportunity to discuss with others around them what their thoughts might be and rehearse what they are going to say.

You might need to provide the students with some examples. Speaking as the mother, they might say: 'What if I hadn't been so fortunate and it was Alexander in there. What would I feel then?' Speaking as the wife, they might say: 'We give more money than lots of people around here and after all it is down to the poor themselves whether they work hard or not.'



# Activity 8: Using Communal Voice to explore the tensions

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Read from the stage instruction before line 1 to line 13 from Act One, Scene 14 (pages 49–50):

*from* Sir William is walking to his study. Alexander runs up behind him.

*to* ALEXANDER But I have to go on studying music. How can I do that if I come back here?

- 2 Choose a student to take the role of Sir William. Ask the other students to sculpt the character into the scene at this point. Emphasise that they will need to consider his frozen position, facial expression and gestures. Encourage the other students to adjust the positions until a final sculpture is agreed.

- 3 Choose another member of the class to adopt the role of Alexander. He is sculpted in to the scene and both characters freeze while you and another student read lines 14–19, Act One, Scene 14 (page 50):

SIR WILLIAM A bargain is a bargain. I made a bargain with you – against my better judgement, mind – but I stuck to it and you will stick to it too. Music is all very well for your friend in there, but it won't do for you.

ALEXANDER But ...

- 4 Ask the students which of the two characters would speak next and what they would say.
- The characters remain frozen, while the student who has suggested the next line goes to stand behind the character they will speak for.
  - Re-read the end of the extract, after which the student will speak the next line.
  - Ask the students what they think the characters would say next. Individuals go and stand by the character that they think they can speak for.

## Activity 8: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the relationship between sons and fathers in the play
- analyse the significance of the music in the play
- demonstrate an understanding of the drama process.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

The students may have different ideas about how the characters should be placed. By physically moving the characters until the group is satisfied with the positioning, the students are visualising their thoughts, discussing the possibilities and, therefore, beginning to explore the text, characters and ideas in detail.

This activity needs to remain tightly structured. Work through the process in stages so that the students fully understand the technique and recognise what is expected of them.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 8 cont.)

- 5 The scene is frozen again, after you have explained that one by one the people behind the sculpted characters will continue the scene by speaking their thoughts or speech. Using Communal Voice continue the conversation between Sir William and Alexander. What will they decide to do?

## Teaching and learning outcomes

You do not need to work out any order for the students to speak in. They will establish the order themselves by using the silences. Explain that they can speak more than once. This is an effective way of allowing the students to recognise the importance of silence and the discipline of the drama process. Remind the students that there will be silences at times, and that they should not talk until they are standing behind one of the sculpted characters.

# Activity 9: Placing the text

## Activities and approaches

- 1 As a whole class, read Act One, Scenes 22 and 23 (pages 70–72).
- 2 Then read extracts 1 and 2, while projecting them.

**Extract 1:** stage instruction before line 2 to line 4, Act One, Scene 25 (page 74)

*from* Sir William bursts from the drawing room in to the hallway with a letter ...  
*to* SIR WILLIAM It's Alexander. He's gone.

**Extract 2:** stage instruction before line 1, Act One, Scene 26 (page 75)

*At Waterside, Melissa walks in and sees the broken virginals. She is horrified. Next to it she sees a note. She rushes to it and picks it up. It has her name on it. She opens it with trembling hands and reads it.*

- 3 Divide the class into groups of three. Give each group the name of a character in the play who may have received a letter from Alexander before he leaves. The characters will include Thomas, Melissa, Lady Ashbrook, Sir William, Edward, Alice and Dr Smith (choirmaster).
- 4 Students should create the letter that Alexander would have written. It is important that they write out two identical versions of this piece of text.

## Activity 9: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- write for a specific audience, with a specific purpose
- select appropriate information from the text
- explore the themes and tensions in the play
- organise and present their ideas appropriately.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

For those students who they feel can cope with a harder challenge, ask them to write a letter to Meshak or Mr Claymore. Remind the students that they need to use the information they have gained from the play and the historical information, as well as their own creative ideas, to write in role as Alexander.

The technique of adding text to the drama (Placing the Text) can be used in many different situations. It helps students to develop the drama at the same time as they are having to think about the language, style and format needed for specific pieces of text with specific audiences in mind. It is also a useful way for students to 'place' texts within a historical or social context, as they have to think carefully about these aspects.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 9 cont.)

When they have completed the letter, ask them to decide which member of their group will adopt the role of the character who receives it. They need to think about how they might sculpt this character into the scene on the Ashbrook Estate and where they might place the letter he or she receives.

- 5 Ask the students to sit in a large circle. Ask the first group to sculpt the character within the circle and position one copy of the letter they have written. This process will continue around the circle until all the characters have been sculpted and the letters positioned.

Once all the pieces of text have been placed, the sculpted characters gradually come to life and, one at a time, turn to look at and/or open the letters that have been written for them.

As the sculpted characters come across each piece of text, they freeze. Other students who have produced the letter read it out from the identical copy they have retained.

The drama continues, stopping as each piece of text is read out. The process stops when all the written pieces have been included. Use appropriate music to introduce and close the sequence.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

Give the students time to decide how they will read their piece of text. What tone and pace will they use? Will they read it together or individually? What tension or atmosphere do they want to create and how will they do this?

# Activity 10: Exploring the adaptation process: from novel to script

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Gather the students into a large semi-circle. Read the following extract from Chapter 2 (pages 20–22) of the novel:

*from The light of his lantern swung a yellow shaft across the canvas ...*

*to He vomited against a tree, leaning his head into the bark so that it left its imprint on his brow.*

- 2 As a class, discuss what issues might need to be considered when adapting this for the stage.

## Activity 10: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- analyse the decisions and techniques used during the adaptation process
- select, organise and present relevant information and ideas in the script and performance
- develop analytical skills and explore the writer's intentions
- consider the difficulties in staging such a scene.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

This thought-provoking extract has been chosen deliberately to explore the tension that exists and demonstrates approaches that can be used on other scenes from the novel/play. Time is spent exploring the adaptation process to develop students' critical thinking and understanding of the process. You will want to ensure that the pace is maintained so that students remain engaged with the activities.

This section enables the students to begin to explore and analyse the adaptation process as well as consider the different aims and techniques of the writer, playwright and director. At this stage you need to encourage students to think about intended audiences and the sensitivity of the issues as well as the actual staging of the play. If there is time, the students could work on scripting this scene.

# Activity 11: Placing the writer and the reader

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Ask the class to sit in a large circle. Return to Chapter 2 (page 22) in the novel at the point when Meshak drops the live baby in the hole:  
*Meshak let go the feebly moving bundle.*
- 2 Choose a student to be in role as Meshak. Ask the students to sculpt him into the position they believe he will be in, using the space inside the circle. They could use a blanket to represent the baby. Other students may question this positioning and will re-sculpt Meshak into a position of their choosing.
- 3 Ask for a volunteer or choose another student for the role of Otis. The character is sculpted into the scene and both characters freeze while you read the following extract from Chapter 2 (page 22):  
*He heard it splosh into the ditch. He backed away whimpering.*
- 4 Ask for a volunteer or choose another student to take the role of the writer (Jamila Gavin).
  - a) Ask students to place the writer in the picture where they think she should be. Students might use various criteria for this, including the writer's distance from certain characters, the empathy created, the events, the writer's intention and what control the narrator has.
  - b) Ask the students to justify their choices, using evidence from the text to support their ideas.
  - c) Discuss the positioning as a class. Ask other students whether they agree with this positioning, and get them to move the writer to where they feel she is best placed. Encourage students to justify their choice with evidence from the text.
- 5 Ask for a volunteer or choose another student to be the reader.
  - a) Ask the students to Place the Reader in the picture where they think he or she should be. The students might use various criteria for this, including the reader's distance from certain characters, the empathy felt, the events, and the reader's understanding of a particular idea.

## Activity 11: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- analyse authorial intention and techniques, and explore the role of the reader and empathy in the text
- select and present evidence from the text to justify their comments
- listen to viewpoints and question critically.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

When sculpting Meshak and Otis, encourage the students to sculpt them in a way that expresses the emotion, tension and relationship.

By physically placing the writer and/or reader, the students question the style, language and authorial control as well as discussing what the reader brings with them to the story. Such work has a direct effect on their ability to write about this and use evidence from the text to back up their ideas. You will be aware that the writer is not being placed as a character in the narrative.

The moving and positioning of the writer and reader enables the students to visualise their ideas and helps them to discuss complex authorial techniques. High-level reading skills are being developed, together with the ability to select and present evidence.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 11 cont.)

- b)** Ask the students to justify their choices.
- c)** Discuss the positioning of the reader as a class. Ask other students whether they agree with this positioning and get them to move the reader to the place they feel is best. Encourage students to justify their choice with evidence from the text.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

# Activity 12: Placing the playwright

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Read the following extract from the stage instructions before line 1 to the stage instructions following line 10, Act One, Scene 7 (pages 31–32):
 

*from* By a dark lake on the **Ashbrook estate**.

*to* He quickly squats and drops her into the hole.
- 2 Ask the students to form a large circle. Using the space within the circle, they should again sculpt the characters into the scene at this point in the play.
- 3 Discuss with students the difficulty in taking the journey from script to stage. Would the director know what is meant by ‘his whole being in rebellion against himself’ (stage instructions following line 10, Act One, Scene 7, page 32) without having read and understood the novel? What does this say about the adaptation process? Is it the playwright, the director or the actors who make the decisions about positioning, facial expressions and gestures? Does the playwright include many stage instructions?
- 4 Choose another student to be the playwright (Helen Edmundson).
  - a) Ask the students to place the playwright in the frozen scene where they think she should be.
  - b) The students should justify their choice, giving evidence from the text to support their ideas. Discuss the positioning as a class. Ask other students whether they agree with this positioning and get them to move the playwright to where they feel she is best placed. Encourage the students to justify their choice with evidence from the text.
  - c) Discuss whether this differs from the position of the writer placed earlier. Why?
- 5 Choose a student to represent the audience. The student representing the audience can now be placed in the same way. Discuss the difference between placing the reader and placing the audience. Is there any? Discuss with the class what this might tell us about the adaptation process.

## Activity 12: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- analyse the adaptation process and discuss the complex decisions that are involved
- analyse the playwright’s intention and techniques and explore the role of the audience in the play
- make decisions and select evidence to support their decisions and ideas.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

By physically Placing the Playwright, the students question the different roles, aims, intentions and purposes of this writer, and the ways in which plays differ from novels. Such work has a direct effect on their ability to write about the adaptation process and use evidence from the texts to back up their ideas.

Ask the students if there are any aspects of the script that they would have wanted to be done differently? Ask them to explain their comments by using evidence from the texts and by referring to the activities that they have completed.



# Activity 13: Placing the Director: dealing with the issues

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Return to the previously sculpted images of Meshak, Otis and the playwright (Activity 12).
- 2 Choose another student to be the director (Melly Still – Director of the National Theatre Production).
  - a) Ask students to Place the Director in the frozen scene where they think she should be, using similar criteria to placing the playwright/writer.
  - b) The students should justify their choice, giving evidence from the text to support their ideas. Discuss the positioning as a class. Ask other students whether they agree with this positioning and get them to move the director to where they feel she is best placed. Encourage students to justify their choice with evidence from the text.
  - c) Discuss whether this differs from the position of the playwright placed earlier. Why?
- 3 Read the following comments adapted from stagework.org about why Melly Still wanted this scene to be changed. As a class, discuss whether this changes the position of the director. Why?

*Another significant change from rehearsal to performance occurred when Melly Still decided to have Otis Gardiner rather than his son Meshak physically force the still-breathing baby (Mercy) into its shallow grave. At first Meshak is seen doing this and the act makes him retch. On further reflection, Melly decided it would appear simply too much for Meshak to comply with his father at this terrible moment, not least because in the second half of the play he displays compassion by saving a baby (Melissa's) from certain death.*

- 4 Return to the sculpted characters of Meshak, Otis, the playwright and the director. The characters freeze while you speak the director's comments:

*I do not think we should have Meshak burying the baby as he would not comply with his father at this terrible moment, not when later he shows compassion ...*

## Activity 13: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- analyse the director's role in developing the play and discuss the complex decisions that are involved
- analyse the director's intention and techniques, and explore the changes that are made
- make decisions and select evidence to support their decisions and ideas.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

By physically Placing the Director, the students question the different roles, aims, intentions and purposes of this role and the ways in which plays differ from novels. Such work has a direct effect on their ability to write about the adaptation and production processes and use evidence from the texts to back up their ideas.

Exploring the director's comments enables the students to consider the different roles of playwright and director during the performance process. It also enables the class to consider the issues involved in presenting the scene on stage and the difficulties that might arise from this.

At this stage you could ask the students which drama convention would help them to explore the issues involved. They might suggest Conscience Alley or other conventions, or the Communal Voice convention used here.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 13 cont.)

- 5 Ask the students who they think would speak next and what they would say in response to this comment. Would the actors respond first or would it be the playwright?  
The characters remain frozen, while the student who has suggested the next line goes to stand behind the character they will speak for.
- 6 Re-read the director's comment, at the end of which the student will speak the next line.  
Then ask students what they think the characters would say next. Individuals go and stand by the character that they think they can speak for.
- 7 The scene is frozen again after you have explained that, one by one, the people behind the sculpted actors, director or playwright will continue the scene by speaking what they say or their thoughts. Using Communal Voice continue the conversation between the director, playwright and actors. What will they decide to do?
- 8 Read the playwright's comments about this scene in which she explains why she felt the script should not be altered despite the director's comments. Discuss with students whether this effects their decision.

*I understood that Melly felt that it would be too grim for us to see Meshak burying the live baby and perhaps out of keeping with the compassion he later shows. However, I also understood why Jamila felt that this would be something Meshak had to do on numerous occasions, and that he had no choice in the matter. The fact that he vomits afterwards reflects how much this action goes against his innate humanity. Ultimately, I decided this was one of those stage directions which could be interpreted very effectively by different directors. Melly's depiction of the scene was fairly graphic, with ashen-faced babies and poignant, crying mothers, and baby Mercy took a long time to die. Another director might decide to realise the scene in a different way, which would not focus on the appalling details of the actual death, but more on the effect on Meshak of what he is forced to do. I felt it would be all right to allow people working on the play in the future to make their own decision about this.*

## Teaching and learning outcomes

This activity needs to remain tightly structured. Work through the process in stages so that the students fully understand the technique and recognise what is expected of them.

You do not need to work out any order for the students to speak in. They will establish the order themselves by using the silences. This is an effective way of allowing students to recognise the importance of silence and the discipline of the drama process. Here, Communal Voice is used to analyse the issues arising from performance, rather than the character's motivation in the play.

## Activity 14: Does the writer remain? Has Jamila Gavin a role in the script and performance?

### Activities and approaches

- 1 Return to the sculpted scene from the play described in Activity 12, which includes the playwright, the director and the audience. The student who represented the writer (Jamila Gavin) in Activity 11, should stand at the side of the frozen scene. Ask the students whether she should be placed into the scripted scene and, if so, where? Does the original writer remain part of the text? Are they left outside the scene? Are they near to the playwright or director, or do they have a different perspective? Ask the students to position the writer where they feel it is most appropriate for her to be.
- 2 Discuss as a class whether everyone agrees with the positioning. Throughout the discussion, other students should demonstrate the position they feel is most appropriate by moving and placing the writer and justifying their choices. Discuss what this might tell us about the adaptation process. Would this be the case with all adaptations?
- 3 Ask the students if the Communal Voice convention was run again, should the writer be given a voice? What would they say?

### Activity 14: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- transfer their understanding of the adaptation process of *Coram Boy* to think critically about the role of the writer in other adaptations
- analyse the relationship between the role of the writer, scriptwriter and director and the differences/similarities between the role of the reader and that of the audience
- make decisions and select evidence to support their decisions and ideas.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

Provide examples of other adaptations, including those of ‘true stories’, to add to the discussion.

Discuss with the students what the actors or director might gain from taking part in similar activities. Ask them who they found most difficult to position. Why?

If time permits, you might want to re-run the Communal Voice activity to explore these ideas further.

# Activity 15: Using Rolling Theatre and Sounds to investigate the characters, atmosphere, issues and ideas

## Activities and approaches

- 1 Divide the class into groups of between three and five students. Give each group an extract from the play (see extracts 1–8 below). Ask each group to choose a simple musical instrument, such as a tin whistle or glockenspiel. Explain that the person with the musical instrument will represent Meshak ‘observing’ the scene taking place.

**Extract 1:** the whole of Act One, Scene 12 (pages 43 to 45) (five or six characters)

**Extract 2:** opening stage instruction to line 60, Act One, Scene 18 (pages 55–57)

*from* Mrs Lynch and Otis enter the drawing room.

*to* OTIS As long as all the rest. (Two characters).

**Extract 3:** lines 47–96, Act One, Scene 20 (pages 61–64)

*from* SIR WILLIAM Alexander! What are you doing out here?

*to* OTIS Just leave him. He’ll get up in a minute. (Five or six characters)

**Extract 4:** the whole of Act One, Scene 31 (pages 80–83) (five or six characters)

**Extract 5:** opening stage instruction to line 18, Act Two, Scene 1 (pages 87–88) and lines 33 to scene end, Act Two, Scene 2 (pages 90–91)

*from* 1750. The **Coram Foundling Hospital**.

*to* GOVERNOR ... May God be with you all.

*and*

*from* AARON Mish! Mish!

*to* Mish picks both of them up and carries them off. (Four characters)

## Activity 15: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop the use of space, language, facial expression and gesture
- investigate and analyse the script, selecting relevant information to explore the characters, issues and ideas
- analyse and question critically others’ performances
- deduce and predict what events and themes are important in the play.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

These extracts, and the activities that follow, have been deliberately chosen to explore the importance of the observer in the play and the significance of music. Depending on the size of the class, you might need to cut some of the extracts. If you do so, you might need to explain the narrative content before moving on to the final activities in this scheme of work. It is useful if there are only a couple of instruments to choose from – e.g. glockenspiels and tin whistles – so that the comparison is between different notes and effects, rather than different instruments used.

### Activities and approaches (Activity 15 cont.)

**Extract 6:** the whole of Act Two, Scene 4 (pages 94–97) (three characters)

**Extract 7:** the whole of Act Two, Scene 6 (pages 99–101) (four characters)

**Extract 8:** the whole of Act Two, Scene 20 (pages 127–129) (two characters)

- 2 Ask the students to produce a short Digital Video Clip of this extract. They begin with a Still Image followed by an Action Reading, then Freeze at the end in a final Still Image. Explain that the Still Images at the beginning and end of the Digital Video Clips should be accompanied by note(s) produced on the instrument. Each group will need to think carefully about what atmosphere will be created by the note(s) they create at the beginning and the end. How might they change? Explain that they should use their note(s) to represent how the observer is feeling at the beginning and end of the scene. They also need to think very carefully about where they position the ‘observer’ within your scene.
- 3 Produce the extracts as Rolling Theatre.
  - a) All the groups freeze in their initial Still Image, placing the observer in a deliberate position.
  - b) The observer in the first group creates the note(s) on the instrument, the first group unfreezes, adds the performance, freezes again and the observer creates the note(s) that accompanies the final Still Image.
- 4 When they freeze and the note(s) is/are heard, the next group knows that they can begin. This continues with all the groups producing their Digital Video Clip until all groups have shown their pieces and punctuated their scenes with the Still Images and note(s).
- 5 When all the groups have shown their pieces and have frozen in the final images, read lines 19–21 Act Two, Scene 9 (page 107), which are spoken in the play by Gaddarn. These lines should also be projected.

*The way a nation treats its poor and unfortunate citizens, most especially its children, is a mark of how civilised it truly is.*

### Teaching and learning outcomes

You might need to model how simple notes can be created to suggest a particular atmosphere. Discuss as a whole class how the playwright has used an observer in many of the scenes and why they think she has chosen to have this idea running throughout the play.

As with Activity 4, you will need to explain the process to the students, emphasising the need for them to remain in their frozen positions. Explain that when they are not presenting their Digital Video Clip, they can become a Spectator. This means that while their bodies remain frozen in the Still Image, their heads can turn to follow the action so that they can see and hear the work of the other groups. They should remain in their places, in order for all the groups to freeze in their final Still Image at the end.

## Activity 16: What Meshak thinks, sees and feels: analysing the layers of meaning

### Activities and approaches

- 1 Working in the same groups as for Activity 15, ask the groups to use the extract they were given to select what they feel is the most important line from the extract.
- 2 Ask them to present a Still Image that illustrates this line and defines the important issues and ideas at this stage in the play. The image can be a literal or symbolic interpretation of the line.
- 3 Ask the students to write the line on a large sheet of paper and place it in front of their Still Image. Explain that they need to decide how the line might be said, while holding the Still Image. Would one character say it? Would it be said in chorus, echoed, whispered? They could use the musical instrument as well if they wanted sound to accompany the line.
- 4 Ask the groups to present a Still Image, which is a representation of Meshak's feelings when he observed that moment. Would he see and hear what is actually taking place or would he see something different? Ask the students to write down on a large sheet of paper what they feel Meshak would think at that moment. They need to write his thoughts in the first person and place it in front of their Still Image. As with the line they have chosen from the extract, explain that they need to consider how the thoughts might be said while holding the second Still Image. What tone or volume might they use? Again, they need to decide whether they want to add music or not.
- 5 All the groups freeze in their initial Still Image.
  - a) The first group says the line from the extract, then gradually merge from their first Still Image into the Image that presents what Meshak sees. Then they speak Meshak's thoughts. Once they have finished and frozen at the end of their extract, the next group will know they can begin, saying the line from the play, merging into the second image and speaking Meshak's thoughts.
  - b) This process will continue until all the groups have merged from one image to the other and spoken the two pieces of text.

### Activity 16: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- develop the use of space, facial expression and gesture
- investigate and analyse the script, selecting relevant information and explore the use of layers of meaning and 'overheard' scenes in a production of the play
- explore a specific character and consider the actor and playwright's response to the complexity of the role.

### Teaching and learning outcomes

Remember to count the students down (5 to 1) into their Still Images and ask them to freeze. You might then suggest that they tweak the images further to emphasise the tension.

This activity needs to be completed in a structured way, developing each Still Image and accompanying text in stages.

## Activities and approaches (Activity 16 cont.)

- 6 A discussion can then take place about the ways in which the playwright encourages us to see things through Meshak's eyes. How is the role of the observer used throughout the play?

## Teaching and learning outcomes

By discussing the Still Images and the differences between them, the students have to think carefully about the text extracts and how the role of the observer would be used on stage. They have to think about the playwright's aims and the dramatic techniques required.

# Activity 17: Music brings the characters and the beginning and ending of the play together

## Activities and approaches

- 1 For this final activity, you will need to read and project the extract from Act One, Scene 1 (page 12) below. Ensure that everyone in the class is seated in a large semi-circle facing the projected text and has with them the word they were given and the object they chose at the beginning of the work on the play.

*Alexander hears and goes towards the voice. He sees Meshak staring up at his angel, singing. He watches him for a moment before answering one of Meshak's phrases, by singing a phrase himself.*

*Meshak looks round, terrified at having been caught.*

- 2 Choose a student to be in role as Meshak. Ask the remaining students to sculpt him into the position in Gloucester Cathedral they believe he will be in, using the space inside the circle. Ask for a volunteer or choose another student for the role of Alexander. The character is sculpted into the scene and both characters freeze.
- 3 You and a student read lines 21 to the stage instructions following line 25, Act Two, Scene 28 (page 146):

*from* MRS HENDRY      Mr Brook? There are two boys at the door ...

*to*                      They reach them.

- 4 Meshak remains sculpted in the earlier scene in Gloucester Cathedral while Alexander is now resculpted, turning his back away from Meshak, into this new scene in the Coram Hospital Chapel. Other students are given the roles of Melissa, Aaron and Toby. They are sculpted in to the scene and all the characters freeze.

## Activity 17: Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the links made between the beginning and end of the play
- analyse the significance of the worlds of Gloucester, Ashbrook Estate and Coram Hospital
- use their understanding gained from all the other activities to approach the ending of the play critically and with integrity
- consider what society is
- demonstrate an understanding of the drama process.

## Teaching and learning outcomes

Before you begin this final activity, ask the students to look back at all the headings to the activities they have done so far. This would also be a good opportunity to discuss all the ideas, comments and quotations collected on the stained glass angel throughout the work.

If you have not studied other aspects of the play, you might need to provide the students with some additional information or explore more of the play before approaching the final activity.

This activity needs to remain tightly structured. Work through the process in stages so that the students fully understand the process and recognise what is expected of them.



## Activities and approaches (Activity 17 cont.)

5 The characters remain frozen in their sculpted position. Ask the rest of the class, individually or in pairs, to bring out an object used in Activity 1. As they place the object anywhere in either of the two scenes, they must complete the phrase: ‘Children need ...’ Each student or pair places the object until all the objects have been placed and the statements completed.

6 The character sculpted as Alexander returns to his sculpted image with Meshak, while the other characters remain in their positions. The music of Handel’s ‘Messiah’ may be played while you read from the stage instructions, Act One, Scene 1 (page 12):

*Alexander hears and goes towards the voice. He sees Meshak staring up at the angel, singing. He watches him for a moment before answering one of Meshak’s phrases, by singing a phrase himself.*

*Meshak looks round, terrified at having been caught. Alexander stares at him. For a moment there is a strange sense of sameness and recognition between them.*

7 The character sculpted as Alexander moves into the position he was sculpted in for the final scene and you now read from the stage instructions following line 25 to line 32, Act Two, Scene 28 (pages 146–147):

*from* He turns and follows her gaze.

*to* ALEXANDER Mish ... was your father too. But he’s with the angels now. He’ll be your guardian angel. Always.

8 All the characters remain frozen, while everyone reads out their words in the correct order to complete Gaddarn’s speech following lines 19–21, Act Two, Scene 9 (page 107):

*The way a nation treats its poor and unfortunate citizens, most especially its children is a mark of how civilised it truly is.*

## Teaching and learning outcomes

Give the students sufficient time to discuss the completion of the phrase and the placing of the object before you begin the activity.

This draws the work to a conclusion, but in doing so prompts further discussion and activities related to the texts. Written work, discussion or further drama activities can, therefore, follow on from this. *Coram Boy* can be used alongside other texts and/or plays and films to develop comparative skills. The work developed here can provide a foundation for a more detailed study of the play or the adaptation process.