

Resource Pack

In Real Life

Written by **Erica Murray**,
Produced by **The Abbey Theatre**
Pack compiled by **Heidi Schoenenberger**

The Abbey Theatre Community and Education Department
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Introduction

In Real Life is an original piece of theatre written by Erica Murray, based on Lady Augusta Gregory's comedy in one act, *Spreading the News*. Similar to the Abbey Theatre's Priming the Canon series (*Me, Mollser, Me, Michael, Me, Sarah* and *Her, Sive*) we've taken inspiration from the existing canon of Irish drama to introduce young people to live performance about issues that affect their lives.

This pack includes some pre-show discussion questions and several post show drama activities based around the themes of the play. We have also made a video of the pre-show discussion questions which you can view [here](#) and would help introduce the performers before their visit to your school. Feel free to use the activities in whatever way you like. We will be handing out feedback sheets and would love to see what you think.

There are some post-show discussion questions on [page 13](#) which we would ask the teacher to lead with after the show is over so the actors can have a breather. Then feel free to ask them any questions about the play, acting, the Abbey Theatre, or anything they like.

In much of our post-covid work in education we've seen young people struggling with mental health challenges. There are lively current debates about social media and its influence. We want students to contribute themselves to these conversations. We believe Erica's play helps make them aware of some of the ethical dilemmas involved and will give them a voice in these debates.

We look forward to meeting you!

Phil Kingston

Community and Education Manager, 2024

How to use this pack

The performance focuses on themes of belonging, self-identity, responsibility for actions, friendship and respect, autonomy, and self-awareness, which directly address the Social Personal and Health Education curriculum. Therefore, this resource pack includes activities that explore self-expression, sharing your opinion, debating and justifying social issues, creativity, and reflection for fifth and sixth class students. The activities address the following key competencies: being creative, being an active citizen, being well, and being a communicator and using language.

We hope young people can explore their relationship to themselves and others through these activities, while thoughtfully reflecting on the performance they saw. We aim for this pack to be used to equip young people with the ability to watch and respond to a performance,

honouring their opinions and providing space for them to create and debate. To do this, we have included discussion questions for before and after the performance along with an on-your-feet activity for the teacher to lead immediately after the performance, before the post-performance discussion with the actors. We aim for the reflection questions and activities to be concise and accessible so that teachers can choose and adapt activities to best suit the needs of their class. Thank you for engaging with us and for providing space for young people to reflect.

Performance credits

Kai, Ms Clarke, Dermot

Laura Brady

Cleo, Bartley, Mairead, Ms Higgins

Evie May O'Brien

Writer

Erica Murray

Director

Ursula McGinn

Costumes

Vicky Miller

Sound Designer

Leon Henry

Composer

Alma Kelliher

Props Master

Eimer Murphy

Stage Manager

Dee Finn

Photography

Gemma Bovenizer

Casting Director

Barry Coyle

Graphic Design

AAD





Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

We recommend engaging your students in the following discussion before seeing the performance. This can be done as a full group discussion or students can respond to the questions individually and then share their responses with another classmate.

How are you feeling about starting in secondary school?

What are your favourite things about primary school?

What are you looking forward to in secondary school?

What (if anything) are you not looking forward to about secondary school?

What are different ways people can express themselves?

Online?

In-person?

What are your favourite things to make and share for others?

How does it differ to share things online vs. in person?

Do you ever talk about the things you see online when you're in school?

How do you feel about using social media?

What is it used for?

What are the best things about using social media?

What are the worst things about using social media?

How do you feel about seeing a live performance?

This performance is based on a play written and performed in Dublin in 1904 (about 120 years ago!) called *Spreading the News* by Isabella Augusta, Lady Gregory. Based on this title and the title *In Real Life*, what do you think the performance will be about?

Lady Gregory wrote about rumours and gossip in her play. How do you think rumours and gossip were spread when *Spreading the News* was written? How has this changed today?

What is your experience seeing live theatre vs. seeing a film?

What might you see, hear, feel, experience when you see a live performance? Think about a concert, a football game, or any other live event you've been to.

How are you feeling about seeing the performance?

Pre-Performance Video Script

This is what the actors say in the video that introduces the questions above:

Hi everyone! I'm Ciara and I'm Evie and we are actors in The Abbey Theatre's performance called *In Real Life*. We're looking forward to sharing this performance with you in your school.

Before we meet you, we'd love for you to chat with your classmates about a few topics that will come up in the show. Feel free to pause the video as we introduce topics and write some ideas first before sharing with the person next to you, or open it up to a large group discussion with your whole class.

The first thing we'd like you to think about is secondary school. As a 5th or 6th class student, how are you feeling about starting in secondary school soon? It might be helpful to think about your favourite things about primary school, what you are looking forward to in secondary school, and what (if anything) you are not looking forward to about secondary school. You can pause now to discuss!

The next thing we'd like you to think about is self-expression. What are different ways people choose to express themselves? Does this differ when it's online rather than in person? What are some of your favourite things or content to make and share

for others? Do you ever talk about the things you see online when you're in school? You can pause the video now to chat.

The final thing we'd like to ask you about is social media. What is it used for? How do you feel about using social media? Are some platforms better than others in your opinion? What are the best things about using social media? The worst things?

Take your time discussing those and have fun letting your classmates know what you think. We can't wait to see you at the show!



Post-Performance Activity

Props to Characters

Duration: 5-30 minutes

Materials: Any object in the room - a scarf, notebook, etc.

Curriculum strands: Drama - Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding: Exploring and making drama

Key competencies: Being a communicator and using language; Being creative

This activity is intended to be done immediately after the performance before the actors join you for a post-performance discussion.

Step One

Discuss the way the actors played many different characters in the performance. What did they use to show who they were? Along with a prop, how did they use body language to turn into a character?

Step Two

Place an object such as a scarf or notebook in the centre of the room or in the “stage space” and invite all of the students to gather around it. Tell the group that this item can be used to help them turn into any character they can think of.

Step Three

Invite all students to stand up straight with their feet flat on the ground in a ‘neutral’ position. Then as an example, invite them to freeze as the character Bartley. How would he stand or sit? Would he be leaning on something? What would be in his hand? Come back to neutral.

Step Four

Invite some students to take a turn to come into the circle and use the object to turn into a character. They can try out one of the characters they saw onstage, act as someone from a film or a book, or create a new one. Ask that they impersonate a character rather than a person in the room or in their school. Guide the students to provide clues about their character by showing how they handle the item, how they move their bodies, etc.: is this person old? Young? Energetic? Cool? Shy? Stiff/stuck up?

Step Five

Depending on how much time you have continue rotating so that many students have a chance to try this out. End the activity by discussing how in performance sometimes we use props to deepen the meaning of the scene or to change between different characters (similar to how the actors changed roles in the performance).

Questions for discussion

How did it feel to try to demonstrate something without using words, but rather by using our bodies and imagination?

In the show, how did the actors use props in interesting ways?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

These questions are to be facilitated by the teacher when the actors return for a discussion. Any that were not covered can be discussed in the classroom after.

What did you notice during the performance?

What did you see? Hear? Feel?

What did the performance make you think of?

What was it like to see two actors playing multiple characters?

Did anything surprise you? If so, what?

Which part(s) brought a smile to your face?

Which part(s) made you feel sad?

Was there any moment that you remember clearly?

How did it feel to speak to the actors during the performance?

Which character from the play do you identify with most, if any?

If you were in Kai's shoes, how would you handle the situation when Cleo posted her audition online?

How would you feel if someone posted something about you? How would you feel if someone started a rumour about you?

Why do you think The Abbey Theatre created this performance?

Would you watch the play again?

What would you like to ask the actors?

Create and Share Telephone Pictionary

Duration: 15 minutes

Materials: Pencil, half sheets of paper, timer

Curriculum strands: Visual Arts–Drawing: Looking and responding; SPHE–Myself: Making decisions

Key competencies: Being creative, Being a communicator and using language

In this activity, the class works in small groups to create something together. It explores what happens when you begin creating something and then give it over for someone else to interpret. Have fun exploring what happens when your ideas transform with someone else’s interpretation. This activity can be done before or after seeing the performance.

Step One

Split the class into groups of 4-6 and provide each person in the group with the same amount of sheets of paper as the number in the group. For example, if there are 4 people in a group, provide each person with 4 sheets of paper.

Step Two

Ask each person to number all of the pieces of paper in their stack in the top corner.

Step Three

Invite each person to write a phrase on the first sheet of paper (labeled number 1). It can be anything, just make sure it is appropriate and something that someone can attempt to draw! For example, “Elephants falling from the sky.” Set the timer for 1 minute for this part.

Step Four

Hand your entire stack of paper to the person on your left. Make sure page #1 with the phrase/caption is on top.

Step Five

Read the phrase on page #1 and then put that piece of paper at the bottom of the stack. Now draw the phrase from page #1 on page #2. Set the timer for 2 minutes for this.

Step Six

Once the time is up, pass the entire stack of paper to the left again, with page #2 on top.

Step Seven

Look at the drawing on top, put it on the bottom of the stack, and on page #3 write (using only words) what you just saw in the drawing. Set the timer for 1 minute for this.

Step Eight

Continue to pass the drawings to the left, alternating between drawing and writing. When the original stack gets back to you and there are no more blank pages left, you are done! Go around the table and share how your original idea changed throughout the activity.

Discuss

What was fun about that activity?

What was challenging about that activity?

How did it feel to see how much your original idea changed?

How did it feel to pass the drawing when you weren't finished?

How might that activity be similar to gossip or spreading rumours?

Discussion and Debate

Exploding Atom

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials: List of agree/disagree statements, a prop to symbolise centre of circle

Curriculum strands: Drama - Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding: Reflecting on drama; SPHE - Myself: Self-identity; Growing and changing; Making decisions; My friends and other people: relating to others

Key competencies: Being an active citizen, Being a communicator and using language

This activity gets the class up on their feet to discuss their opinions about some grey-area issues that came up in the performance. We recommend doing this activity after the performance. This activity is adapted from [Drama Based Pedagogy](#).

Step One

Invite the class to stand in a large circle. Place an object such as a pen or notebook in the centre of the circle.

Step Two

Tell the class you will be reading out a few statements that have no right or wrong answer. Explain that the closer you get to the object in the centre, the more you agree with the statement. Going far away from the object means you strongly disagree.

Step Three

Read any of the following statements aloud one at a time and provide time for the students to quietly find a place in the circle depending on how strongly they agree with the statement. Once they have found a spot, open it up for discussion by asking volunteers to share why they agree, disagree, or both. You can also invite

students to turn to someone near them and discuss why they placed themselves there. Re-set the group to a neutral circle between statements to prepare for the next prompt.

You may begin with an example connected to the show such as “Liverpool is the best football club.”

Agree/Disagree Statements

Posting the audition video was an invasion of privacy (if students didn’t see the performance: posting a video of someone’s audition online is an invasion of privacy)

People forget the stuff they post online, they just swipe to the next big thing (Bartley)

It’s completely normal these days to share whatever you want about your life online (Cleo)

I can say anything I want on social media, it’s total freedom (Kai)

Online I’m my real self (Kai)

Gossiping isn’t a nice thing to do (Kai)

It is dangerous to trust everything you hear (Ms Higgins)

Showing everyone who you are in real life is braver than a social media post

If someone you know is being bullied online, telling an adult will make it worse

Reflection

What did you notice about the responses in the room?

What did we learn about the group from this activity? Where were we most in agreement? Why?

How might these statements make us think differently or understand more about the use of social media/ friendship/trust/self-expression/ privacy, etc.?

Teacher note

Add as many statements as you see fit or if an interesting, related discussion topic comes up, create your own statements from this or invite the students to share a statement for others to respond to.

Reflect and Share

Express Yourself

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Materials: Reflective drawing response sheet, drawing materials

Curriculum strands: Visual Arts - Drawing: Looking and responding; Drama - Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding: reflecting on drama; SPHE - Myself: Self-identity

Key competencies: Being creative, Being well, Being a communicator and using language

This activity allows the class to work individually to explore reflective self-expression. We recommend doing this activity after the performance.

Step One

Invite the class to respond to the show individually by drawing a response to the prompt “Draw something you saw or felt during the show.” This can be the first thing you remember, something beautiful, something moving, something funny, etc.

Step Two

Underneath the drawing write what you thought about Kai and Cleo’s story.

Step Three

The teacher can decide whether to share this in the full group, in pairs, or to collect these. We encourage you to share a copy of your student responses with us at The Abbey by sending them to Phil Kingston, Abbey Theatre, 26-27 Lower Abbey Street, Dublin, D01 K0F1 or email to InRealLife@abbeytheatre.ie.

Discussion Questions

Why did you decide to draw this particular moment?

Drawing is a form of self-expression for some people. Cleo expresses herself through dancing and Kai expresses herself through songwriting.

In what ways do you like to express yourself?

What is your favorite way to express yourself?

(encourage people to think about any form of creative decision making - clothing, sport, coding, gardening etc..)

What, if anything, keeps you from expressing/being yourself?

Where do you feel most comfortable being yourself?

Extension activity

Invite the class to respond to the performance with a song, dance, more detailed drawing, poem, or any other form of expression that comes up in discussion.

Reflect and Create

Performance Poster/Trailer

Duration: 30-60 mins

Materials: Pencil and paper can be used, or these can be done online using Microsoft Word or [Canva](#)

Curriculum strand: Drama - Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding: reflecting on drama; co-operating and communicating in making drama; SPHE - Myself and the wider world: media education

Key competencies: Being creative, Being a digital learner, Being a communicator and using language

This activity encourages the class to work in small groups to reflect and summarise the most memorable aspects of the performance by creating a performance poster or film trailer. We recommend doing this activity after seeing the performance. This activity is adapted from [Imagine's on TAP resource](#).

Step One

Tell the class you've been invited to create an advertisement for this performance. It can be an infographic/ poster or, if you can dedicate more time, a film trailer. Begin by brainstorming the group's favourite moments from the performance and different ways of advertising.

Write or type these for the class to refer to based on the following questions:

What are common forms of advertising for live events such as theatre, a concert, or a sports match?

What are the moments from the performance you would like to remember?

Who are the main characters that would have to be shown on an advertisement for this performance?

What are the most important parts of the play you'd like to get across to the audience?

Who is your audience? (Who do you think should see this performance?)

How will you convince someone to see this performance in a short amount of time?

How will you create this advertisement - using ipads, devices, pen and paper? Do you need a storyboard?

Does your advertisement need to be planned out or can it be improvised?

If making a trailer, what roles do you need in the group to create it?

Step Two

This can be done either individually or in small groups. If working in groups, invite each group to designate specific roles they will take for this activity and then make decisions based on the above questions about how they want to go about making their poster or trailer. If doing a trailer, let the group know how short it will be (choose a 15 second, 30 second, or 45 second video clip).

Step Three

Once the students have an idea, encourage them to put it into action either by designing, rehearsing, or beginning to film.

Step Four

Invite the group to share their performance ads with one another, and even to another class.

Step Five

To reflect, show the class the [performance webpage](#) and discuss what the images tell you about the performance and how they are similar or different to what the class decided to promote.

Discuss

What was it like to have to communicate an idea in a short amount of time?

What were the most exciting parts of this activity? The most challenging?

How were other people's advertisements similar? Different? What does this say about the group's experience seeing the performance?

Thank You for watching In Real Life today.

Draw something you saw
or felt during the show:

Do tell us what you thought
about Kai and Cleo’s story:

References and Further Information

Drama Based Pedagogy

<https://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/teaching-strategies/exploding-atom>

Imagine's pre- and post-show digital resource

<https://www.imagine.org.uk/ontap/>

Irish curriculum online

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/primary/>

Production webpage and performance images

<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/whats-on/in-real-life/>

Spreading the News by Lady Gregory

http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/authors/classic/Gregory_A/Drama/Spreading_N.pdf

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For more information on this resource pack and the Abbey Theatre's education work please contact **Phil Kingston**, Community and Education Manager at phil.kingston@abbeytheatre.ie or visit www.abbeytheatre.ie/get-involved/schools/

