



***Mother Courage & Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht
Translated by Wesley Enoch and Paula Nazarski**

Education Resources



Compiled by Heidi Irvine.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as the starting point for educators in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Heidi Irvine is the Education Program Coordinator for Queensland Theatre Company. You can contact Heidi on hirvine@queenslandtheatre.com.au

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At the Theatre

We'd like to welcome you to the experience of attending a live performance – while we know you get all the etiquette stuff, here's a reminder of some simple information you can pass on to your students.

1. We ask you to get involved in the performances by applauding and laughing at appropriate moments. If you have a question – ask your teacher at the interval/end of the show or one of the cast, if you have a chance for a Question & Answer session.
2. Food or drink is not permitted in the theatre.
3. Live theatre is different to TV – the actors on stage can hear and see you and there are other members of the audience to think about. If you need to leave the performance for any reason, please ensure this is done quickly and quietly and at an appropriate break in the action.
4. Switching your phone to silent isn't the only thing to do. Please ensure that you switch off your mobile phone and leave it in your bag before the performance begins. The glow of the iPhone screen is obvious to others and is very distracting!

The fine print

Location: Playhouse, QPAC. 25 May – 16 June.

Writer: Bertolt Brecht, translated by Wesley Enoch and Paula Nazarski.

Cast: Mark Atkins, George Bostock, Luke Carroll, Chenoa Deemal, Dave Dow, Roxanne McDonald, Paula Nazarski, David Page, Robert Preston, Michael Tuahine, Eliah Watego and Ursula Yovich.

Queensland Theatre Company and Queensland Performing Arts Centre present Bertolt Brecht's epic morality tale about the ravages of war, given a unique twist by Queensland Theatre Company Artistic Director Wesley Enoch and Paula Nazarski in a dazzling new translation.

Instead of the Thirty Years' War of 1600s Europe, this near-future incarnation of the age-old story is set against the bleak backdrop of a post-apocalyptic desert where Mad Max might be at home – an Australia ravaged by devastating conflict, where life is cheap but business is still business.

Ursula Yovich is the titular canteen-wagon mistress, shrewdly driving hard bargains as she shepherds her brood of three through this unforgiving, harsh wilderness.

With an all-Indigenous cast, this fresh spin on Brecht's play delicately folds in themes of land ownership, the impact of mining and the Stolen Generation.

**Warnings: Low level coarse language and low level sexual references.
References to alcohol and adult situations.**

Creatives

Director: Wesley Enoch

Designer: Christina Smith

Lighting Designer: Ben Hughes

Composer: John Rodgers

Assistant Director: Janine Matthews

In the circle – Practical classroom activities

<i>Mother Courage & Her Children</i> – A production overview	
Elements	Examples/Explanation
Role	The titular role of Mother Courage is a perfect example of a protagonist. She not only drives the action through the play, she also creates all of the situations from her actions. Everything that happens in the play is part of Mother Courage's doing.
Structure	The structure of the play works very true to Epic Theatre. The story is in the form of a fable, and shows historical events. Brecht's intention in using known material was to make it unsensational: by taking away any attraction-grabbing 'wrapping' that an original story may have, Brecht was stripping away a disguise that dramatic theatre often uses.
Conventions	The play uses music, the actors onstage and visible and the very strong, topical themes of War, Family and Mining. This is very apt with the way a traditional Brecht text works.
Mood	The mood of the play, whilst dark and unrelenting, also offers the audience a sense of hope, with the way that Mother Courage continues to fight throughout the piece.
Performance, Themes and Dramatic Elements	
Contemporary text translated from a Heritage text, Music, Brechtian conventions, Indigenous Theatre, War, Mining, and Family.	

Glossary

INDIGENOUS WORDS AND COLLOQUIALISMS

BIG HOLE: Can be used as an insult to someone who has loose morals; also refers to a person with an insatiable greed.

BIG NOTING: Someone who is showing off.

BINAGARRI: Eavesdropping.

BINUNGS: Ears.

BOODJUL: Describing the physical deficiencies or deformities of an object; can also describe the lack of physical or mental capabilities of a person; used to describe an unfavourable situation; and can be used to describe someone's state of embarrassment.

BOODU: Penis.

BOSSMAN: Person in actual or perceived position of power.

BROTHER: Term of endearment in reference to an Indigenous man; term of reference to males within a generation often referred to as the kinship circle.

BUB: Usually in reference to a young person or child.

BUNGEE: Best friend.

BUNGOO: Money.

BUSHEL: Refers to a bush in the biblical sense.

CAMP BIKE: Derogatory term for a woman of loose morals.

CHARGED UP/CHARGE: Charged up; a verb pertaining to getting drunk/Charged; an adjective to describe a person who is already drunk.

DEADLY: Slang term for something good, excellent, fantastic; to give praise.

DODGEY: Not right or not good.

DORRIE: Meaning to look; can also mean to look with a suspicious intent.

DORRIS: Same as Dorrie. Can also mean someone who gossips.

DOUGALS: Same as Boodjul.

ER LA: To gain someone's attention, meaning look at me or come over here.

ERE NOW: Statement of fact or an announcement of arrival.

FLASH: Really nice, fancy.

FLASH BLACK: Reference to a black person who is well presented and appears wealthy.

GAMMIE (LEGS): A physical deformity of one or both legs.

GAMMON: Joking, don't mean it, telling lies.

GEAL: Urine &/or urination.

GIN: Derogatory term for an Aboriginal Woman.

GOOLLY: Not happy.

GOONA: Excrement.

GORN: Going, go ahead.

GUMBEES: Slang for underwear.

HEY: Calling attention to someone.

HORRORS: Extremely intoxicated.

HUMBUG: Creating trouble/up to no good.

JARJUM: Child.

JINDU: Woman.

KNOCK OFF: Stop, settle down, can be used in a humorous manner or serious reprimand.

LEGGIN IT: Running away, usually from an unfavourable situation.

LIFT YA: Threat of physical violence or a warning of impending physical violence.

LOOK OUT: Be careful; be considerate.

MAGIC WOMAN: A female practitioner gifted with the art of healing the physical and spiritual energies for their tribe/community. They also possess an insight of the spirit world.

MIGALOO: Man or woman of white skin being of non-Indigenous heritage.

MISSION BREED: Describes someone who grew up on a reserve/mission; also can be used to refer to a person acting in that way.

MOB: Can be used as a description of family and/or community.

MONNDEE: Backside.

MONYOU: Backside.

MOUCHIN': A person who avails themselves of other people's resources.

MURRI: Aboriginal person from Queensland.
MYALL: A combination of shame & extreme shyness.
OFFERED ME OUT: To start a fight.
SAME SAME: Vernacular speech.
SHAME: Describes embarrassment &/or situation.
SHAMING: (Shame – Embarrassment) The action of embarrassing someone.
SISTA GIRLS: Term of endearment in reference to another Indigenous woman or group of Indigenous women; also used in reference to transgender Indigenous men.
SHAKE A LEG: Corroboree: Traditional dance. Can also mean to get a move on.
SMASH: Physical violence against another person.
STYLIN UP: Dressed up.
SUSS: Slang for suspect, something not quite right.
SUSU'S: Breasts.
TRIBE: Community pertaining to one's extended family group.
TRUE THAT: Statement of fact.
TRUES GOD: Honest truth.
TUCKER: Food.
WALKABOUT MOB: A group of people who travel around.
WHAT FOR: Vernacular speech.
WHICH WAY: Gain attention; asking a question; what are you doing.
WINKY: Wary.
WOMBA: State of mind or action e.g.: crazy, mentally unstable; also an insult.
WONGY WONGY: Similar meaning to Womba, but more severe mental instability.
YARN: To have a conversation.
YOUR CRACK: Meaning backside.

AUSTRALIAN COLLOQUIALISMS/SLANG

BALLSED UP: Ruined, in a mess.
BELLY UP: Intoxicated by alcohol; dead (like a dead fish that floats belly up).
BLUE: Fight/make a mistake.
BUGGARS: Slang for troublemakers.
BUST A GUT: Work very hard; to strain one-self to accomplish something; to work very hard or to make a big effort to achieve something.
CATTING: To be desperately in need of something; to desire a drug usually after a night in or on a comedown – strong colloquialism, copying what someone else is doing (imitating them).
COMING A CROPPER: To have a misfortune to fail (fall off one's horse).
CROCK OF SHIT: A collection of lies.
DOG ME: To have someone do wrong by you.
DO GOODER: Someone who thinks they are helping society.
DUDS: Not working. A Dud.
DUNNY: Toilet.
ECHIDNA: Australian native animal known as Spiny Anteaters – monotreme order of egg-laying mammal; named after a monster in Ancient Greek Mythology.
EGGING YA ON: Encouragement.
FANGIN: Slang for cruising off at speed/hungry.

FLINCH: To withdraw or shrink from or as if from pain; to tense the muscles involuntarily in anticipation of discomfort.

FLOG: Beat as punishment.

FOOT FALCON: Travel by foot, as your only means of travel.

FOUR BEE: Four wheel drive car.

FROG AND TOAD: Cockney rhyming for "road".

GIDDAY (G'day): Informal greeting, slang term used as a substitute for good day.

GROG: Alcohol; slang for liquor.

HARD UP: Not having enough cash, money; broke; in a rock and a hard spot. A difficult situation.

IN A PINCH: Adverb in an urgent or difficult situation/ Synonym when push comes to shove, chips are down, no money.

ITCHY FORK: A derogatory term used to describe someone who has loose morals and has contracted a venereal disease.

LONG IN THE TOOTH: Old, especially of horses or people.

MATE: Colloquialism used to refer to a friend.

MOLE: Australian and NZ slang usually pejorative or self-deprecating for a woman of loose morals, a bitch, slut or a prostitute.

MONGREL: Despicable or nasty person – Australian slang.

MORETON BAY FIG: *Ficus macrophylla*: large, evergreen, Banyan Tree. Common name derived from Moreton Bay in Queensland, Australia.

NECKED: In reference to being hung by way of corporal punishment.

OLD CRUSTY FORK: Someone who once had questionable morals.

OUTTA THE BLUE: Slang of "out of the blue" phrase describing an unexpected event.

PARKIE: Refers to someone who lives on the street/homeless.

PARKIES ARSE: Meaning to have no money.

PISS AND WIND: All talk and no action – British Slang.

PISSING IN ME POCKET: Insincerely attempt to convince a person that you're doing them a favour when you actually have only your own interests at heart.

PISSING UP A WALL: Waste one's money.

RED BELLY BLACK SNAKE: Native to Eastern Australia. One of Australia best known snakes.

REGO: Abbreviation for registration papers.

SKINT: Having no money. To be broke.

SNIPPY: Short tempered, snappish/unduly brief or curt.

STAND OUT LIKE DOG BALLS: English colloquial simile – self-explanatory.

STINK EYE: Dirty look/give someone a really nasty look to show your distaste for them.

SWEET F.A.: Original phrase was Sweet Fanny Adams, means bugger all or nothing

TRIPLE BANKED: When three people gang up on one person to inflict physical punishment.

TUCKER: Australian slang for food.

TWO BY FOURS: A piece of lumbar approximately 2 by 4 inches as sawed usually 1 5/8 by 3 5/8 inches when dressed.

UP SHIT CREEK: To be in deep trouble with no solution.

A NOTE FOR USING THE RESOURCES.

Please note that many of these resources refer to the original text. Whilst the translation has interpreted the context and the characters of the play, the plotline and integrity of the characters remain in line with the original text.

Brecht Basics for *Mother Courage & Her Children*

Taken from <http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/mothercourage/themes.html>

War as Business

Brecht states that the play conceives of war as a "continuation of business by other means." War is neither some supernatural force nor simply a rupture in civilisation but one of civilisation's preconditions and logical consequences. In this respect, there are many dialogues – the most explicit one appearing in Scene 3 – that cast war as another profit venture by Europe's great leaders. Mother Courage is the play's primary small businesswoman, parasitically living off of the war with her canteen wagon. Courage's commitment to the business of war will cost her children, the war taking back for what it has provided her in flesh.

Virtue in Wartime

Brecht also remarks that war "makes the human virtues fatal even to their possessors." This "lesson" appears from the outset of the play, prefiguring the fate of Mother Courage and her children. Telling each of her children's fortunes, Courage will conjure their deaths at the hand of their respective virtues: bravery, honesty, and kindness. As we will see, Brecht often attributes these virtues ironically. Courage, for example, is often a coward, and Eilif is more a murderer than a brave hero.

Verfremdungseffekt

The *Verfremdungseffekt*, alienation or "distanciation" effect is the primary innovation of Brecht's epic theatre. By alienating the spectator from the spectacle, its devices would reveal the social *gestus* underlying every incident on-stage and open a space for critical reflection. Often alienation also means making the workings of the spectacle possible, and decomposing the unity of the theatrical illusion. Brecht called for the spectator's alienation to oppose the mystifying tendencies of the conventional stage, tendencies that reduced its audience to passive, trance-like states. The possible techniques of alienation are endless. Slight changes in pace, alternative arrangements of the players on-stage, experiments in lighting, gesture, and tone. The success of each scene in *Mother Courage* hinges upon these devices. For example, Courage's "*Song of the Great Capitulation*", when played without alienation, risks seducing the spectator with the pleasures of surrender rather than exposing the depravity in the submission to an unjust authority.

Allegory and the Morality Play

As the name of its eponymous heroine suggests, *Mother Courage* poses the tradition of the morality play as its backdrop. Pedagogical in its intent, the morality play is conventionally organized around Everyman as its protagonist and various characters personifying Vices and Virtues. Action consists of their struggle, whether for the

Everyman's soul or otherwise. Similarly Mother Courage offers Courage and her children as sense personifications the virtues that do them in during the war: wisdom, bravery, honesty, and kindness. Obviously, it is also profoundly pedagogical in its intentions.

Despite these similarities, it is clear that Brecht fundamentally departs from the morality play tradition as well. Certainly Courage - explicitly located in her particular socio-historical context as well as the context of the performance - is no Everyman. Moreover, the epic form militates precisely against a structure of ready identification between spectator and character that the universal Everyman clearly establishes. In the morality play, we are all "Everyman." Also, Brecht's play distorts the one-to-one correspondences (e.g. Kattrin is kindness) the morality play poses, exploiting the dissonances and arbitrary relations between the terms of its allegories. In the "*Song of the Great Souls of the Earth*", which awkwardly uses Socrates to figure for the simpleton Swiss Cheese, the spectator becomes conscious of the structures of figurative language that make these relations possible. By playing on the dissonances between song and action, song and character, the play would again distance the spectator from the spectacle and generate his critical reflection.

Music

At times the reader of Brecht feels trapped in a Marxist Gilbert and Sullivan musical. Rather than accompany or integrate itself into the theatrical illusion, music largely assumes an independent reality in Mother Courage, standing apart from the action. Brecht often underscored this separation by lowering a musical emblem whenever such a song would arise. Music is neither a simple accompaniment nor exclusively the expression of a character's current state, at times functioning instead in its autonomy as allegory, or as covert political commentary. Often it assumes a pedagogical function. Note, for example, how Courage teaches the soldier surrender through her song of capitulation or Yvette attempts to harden Kattrin to love through her "*Fraternization Song*".

Business practices

Deemed a "damned soul", Mother Courage works tirelessly, resting only once in the course of the play. Her haggling, careful inventory, and so on frame and punctuate the action, emphasizing its underlying the social gestus. Courage always protects her interests shrewdly, inquiring into the fate of the war with only her profit in mind. Her practices emerge from the social conditions that determine the characters, committing her to the war. Ultimately she will lose each of her children as a result. Moreover, as the final scene chillingly shows, so ritualised are these practices that Courage will not learn from her losses.

Capitulation

Written in the midst of the growing Nazi terror, Mother Courage would impel its spectators to oppose war. In this respect it features a number of moments of capitulation as object lessons. Mother Courage emphasizes the ritual character of capitulation. Years of war have frozen the people into fixed patterns of surrender and lamentation. Standing against these surrenders is Kattrin, disfigured and silenced by

war trauma to which she continually bears witness, who risks both livelihood and life to save a town under surprise attack.

Maternity

Against Mother Courage – a mother who fails to protect her children – the play places Kattrin. Her kindness involves an impulse to mother in opposition to her mother's cold-hearted business sense. If Courage's war spoils consist of the loot she can scavenge, Kattrin's are the children she saves. Notably, her heroic intervention – one that breaks her stony silence, is the salvation of the children of Halle.

Key Facts

FULL TITLE: Mother Courage and Her Children.

AUTHOR: Bertolt Brecht.

GENRE: Epic theatre, social drama.

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN: Written during Brecht's exile in Sweden, 1939.

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION: 1941.

CLIMAX: As a work of "epic theatre", Mother Courage does not adhere to the Aristotelian model of plot and thus does not involve a structure of rising and falling action, climax, and catharsis. In some sense, each scene exists for itself.

PROTAGONISTS: Mother Courage, Kattrin, Swiss Cheese, and Chaplain.

SETTING (TIME): The Thirty Years War (Spring 1624 – January 1636).

SETTING (PLACE): Throughout Europe (Germany, Poland, Bavaria, and Saxony).

POINT OF VIEW: Point of view is not located as there is no narrator figure.

FALLING ACTION: Again, as a work of "epic theatre", Mother Courage does not adhere to the Aristotelian model of plot.

TENSE: The play unfolds in the time of the present.

FORESHADOWING: Most notably, Courage's game of fortune telling in the first scene foretells the death of her children.

TONE: Tragi-comic.

THEMES: War as business; virtue in wartime.

MOTIFS: *The Verfremdungseffekt*, allegory, music, business practices, maternity, capitulation.

Interview with Wesley Enoch, Translator and Director.

What continues to make Brecht so popular? Why do we continue to visit these kinds of texts...? Is it because it's got these key tragic figures? Is Brecht now our contemporary Greek theatre?

*Well I think the role of any writer is to find the little piece of humanity. The little piece of what makes us human and really put their finger on it... and then stomp on it a bit. If you think about the style in which Brecht was writing, sort of pre-World War 2 and post-World War 2, and in Germany. And then in exile and then back again, what he was actually able to do. I think every writer captures the energy of a generation and when you get them, you get the Arthur Miller's and you get the Absurdist's. You get them because they are capturing the energy of that generation of people. All that politically charged trauma in a society throughout Europe and throughout the world, he was able to crystallise into a set of characters and situations that spoke to the generations, so we don't see it as historical, we see it as who we are as people. These sorts of plays talk about our history, not necessarily in the stories they tell, but in the energy that was in the community at the time. It's like *The Crucible*, to talk about McCarthyism, talk about witch hunts and you think about it now and what a clean and easy connection it is. But it is part of the history to talk about what the energy is now, and are similarities there and in the same way to talk about the 1600's. And the 30 year war in Europe that just decimated the place and in fact setup all the kind of tensions that would play out for the next 400 years. Like what we are experiencing in the last 10 - 15 years in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, where all these tensions and economic alliances were set up hundreds of years ago. What he has done really cleverly is connect those points in time, and for us now to say, "Well what we can talk about now in this country is, yes, war is as much economic, as anything else you know. But for us, if we were to go into war or into civil war at the moment it would be around ideas of ownership and foreign ownership.*

I can draw parallels between a Medea, a character from Greek Theatre through Brecht into some of the narratives, because they are fundamentally human stories. I think Brecht; there are foundation disciplines in theatre, Greek Theatre and chorus. If you go back a bit there were always these discussions and some of the foundation disciplines are always Greek Theatre, Brecht, Brechtian styles, Absurdism, Shakespeare... These are fundamental styles because we use them as a little shopping trolley and we now, as bowerbirds, just pick what we want from them because in post-modernism or post dramatic, we are allowed to borrow from a whole range of traditions to create a new whole and that's what's interesting.

What do you like about working with a large cast?

There is this definition of a lead Actor which I really love, it's not the person with the most stage time, it's the actor who will lead a company of actors into a style, into a form of interpretation and things and what I love watching Ursula (Yovich) do, is lead by example on how she's going to interpret this and build things around her. To

watch these different orbits, it's called Mother Courage, there is no escaping that she is absolutely it on stage, there is very few times she is not on stage. That sense that she just takes us through this journey in a really clear way and watching these different orbits of actors around her be touched by that influence is really interesting as a style thing. I like the idea of lots of brains in the room as well, and that you are able to get multiples of generations on stage so you see an older man, a middle aged man, and an older woman or middle aged woman. There is this spectrum and everyone's learning from each other and then there is part of me that goes, that's actually how it should be.

The best way to learn is by doing it; you don't have to go to University. You know, just to be there and do it all the time is really important for you. I think also with 11 actors there's, because of my dance background, I love the idea of the choreography. I start to shape the space. For example, when I did 'Bombshells' and there's a single actor on stage, you shape the space by what the set can do. But then you get out of the way and let the actor connect with the audience. When you get to something like 'Managing Carmen', like I did last year it's again about the choreography of the space and what you can do to keep this kind of fluid momentum going.

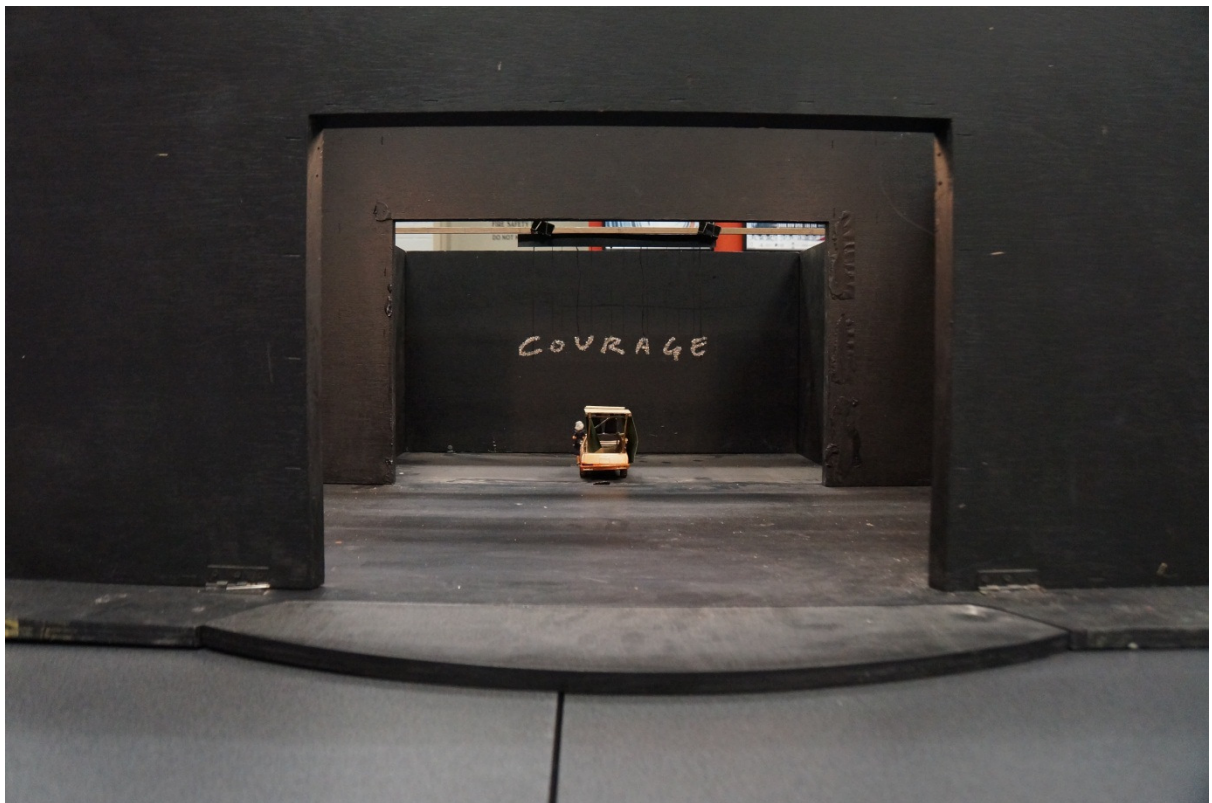
Do you find that the influence of having a dance background in choreography plays a lot in the way that you direct a piece?

Absolutely, I am very concerned with where the eye is going. In film the editor tells you the rhythm of the piece and where to look and what is important. In theatre it is the choreographer of the space that tells you that. Here is a really good point, were Ursula is quite short - I thought it was a good thing that the most powerful character onstage is the shortest in the cast. It would be interesting for students to look at how I've kept her high, I've kept her up levels and tried to give her height over everything and that she gets more and more diminutive as the play happens. Near the end she's just this little woman in this big space. So trying to carve up the space in such a way to make her feel powerful and I give her a set item that she is always in relationship to, so you never really get to see how small she really is.

Set Model Images
By Christina Smith







Script Extract

Scene Two

MAN:

Two years later Mother Courage moves around the Land on the trail of one army and avoiding the other. Outside a compound she meets her son again. The lucky sale of a chicken and great days for her bold son.

The Commander's tent. Beside it a kitchen. Thunder of guns. The cook is arguing with Mother Courage who wants to sell a capon.

Cook:

Sixty bucks for that boodjul bird?

Mother Courage:

Boodjul bird? This fat beast, not even. Which-way your Bossman Commander is known all over for his love of a good feed and you wanna be servin him a gammie little taste. Like you got no bungoo, good go.

Cook:

I could get a dozen just like that for ten bucks just up the road there.

Mother Courage:

Not even, you couldn't get one half this size within 100ks from here. You might be able to get your hands on a field rat but even they're on the thin side. I seen five blokes all gone wongy wongy from hunger chasing a field rat for half a day, poor fellas. Fifty bucks for this big fella. Come on youse are in the middle of a siege.

Cook:

We're not in the middle of a siege, them big bossmen over there, they're in the middle of a siege. We are the be-siegers.

Courage:

You now, when you have less to eat than those who are under siege then youse the one in trouble. Them fellas are all living large in there, whereas the mob down here on the farms have nothin.

Cook:

The farmers? They got tucker, they just hiding it.

Courage:

(triumphantly) Gammin. Their soil's gone sour and now they're starving. I even seen some dougals digging up the roots and lickin their fingers after a boiled leather strap. Which-way now, you want be to just give up this choice chook for a gammin forty bucks.

Cook:

Not even, thirty not forty.

Mother Courage:

But here now, this bird he deadly one. Would only eat when music was bein played to him and he danced up. This one here could count even, that's how special he was. And which-way I'm suppose to just give him away for a gammin forty bucks? If you got nothing to serve that bossman, he's gonna eat your head.

Cook:

I'm not worried. Look now, see what I'm doin?

(he takes a bit of beef and sticks his knife in it)

Goin cook a roast, so you see I'd be doin you a favour by takin that boodjul bird off your hands.

Mother Courage:

Gorn then, give the bossman a slab of meat that's been dead for at least a year.

Cook:

Bugger off, I seen him runnin round the paddock yesterday arvo.

Mother Courage:

It's a miracle, a dead dog running round a paddock.

Cook:

It was a cow, not a dog, and after 2 hours in a stewpot, it will be as tender as a tit.

(he cuts into the meat)

Mother Courage:

Gorn, you wanna cook that rottin dead dog. Best be smashing that beast with pepper so the Commander don't smell 'im stinkin'!

Tasks – Ideas for Responding

If you are responding to the performance, here are some resources that will help students to get writing. Both of these resources can easily be reproduced as handouts for your students.

How can I use the Elements of Drama?

The Elements of Drama can enhance a student's understanding of a production and its effectiveness.

The Elements of Drama include:

- Focus
- Space
- Role
- Relationships
- Time/Place/Situation
- Tension
- Structure
- Language/Sound
- Movement/Timing/Rhythm
- Atmosphere/Mood/Symbol/Moment
- Audience Engagement/Dramatic Meaning

Here are some activities which can enhance your students understanding of some of the elements.

Character: Character exercises are vital and you may want to start with exercises that focus on awareness of facial expression, tone of voice, body language and movement. You could incorporate improvisations here or choose excerpts from scripts. Some concepts you might also like to explore here are making offers, accepting offers, accepting and committing to the fiction, conviction/belief, status, and action/reaction.

Time/Place/Situation/Tension: Improvisation is key here. Play around with scenes that allow students to explore not only some typical situations but some unusual ones as well e.g. underneath a rock, at the bottom of the ocean etc. Really focus on the concept of conflict here.

Language/Sound: Voice workshops are a brilliant starting point. Have students become aware of their breath, throat and diaphragm. Consider doing an accent workshop. Have them work with scripts to explore clarity, volume, pitch, pace, inflection, emphasis and pause. Consider how atmosphere can be created using soundscapes and body percussion. Explore scenes that use no sound or language.

Atmosphere/Mood/Symbol: Watch some film excerpts that use music to guide the audience's feelings in a scene. Consider the use of colour and set in costumes and what they mean to the audience.

Audience Engagement/Dramatic Meaning: At the conclusion of every exercise always ask the class what it was about the element of drama that made the audience feel engaged in the action on stage and what they understood was

happening on stage because of that element. In adding this in to your classroom discussion you are helping your students become critical thinkers and theatre appreciators.

Writing a Review – Where do I start?

After watching a performance, you will have quite a strong sense of whether or not it was effective. This is usually reinforced through your feelings of whether or not you were engaged, moved, excited or disinterested in the performance. The following categories and questions may assist students in writing a review.

Introduction

Include the name of the play you are reviewing, the name of the playwright, the theatre where the performance was held and the date of the performance; if you choose, you may also indicate your overall impression of the play.

Plot

This is the actual action that happens on stage. Try to reduce the whole story into a brief paragraph that includes all the main events.

Discuss themes and issues

Outline the themes and issues that you feel were important in the play. The themes and issues carry the message of the play and are important in helping the audience gain meaning from the performance. You should also discuss your impression of the directorial concept in your review. Comment on the director's interpretation of the play, and how the choice of dramatic form and performance style helps to communicate the play's themes and issues.

Analyse character objective and motivation

Describe and analyse the characters. To find the character's objective, ask yourself the question: What does the character want to achieve by the end of the play? To find the character's motivation, ask yourself the question: Why does the character want to achieve their goal?

Evaluate the performer

(Give examples wherever possible!)

- How well did the actors use body language to express their character?
- Were their movements and gestures appropriate for their character?
- How well did they use their voice to express character and deliver lines?
- How focused did they seem during their performance?
- How convincing did the performer seem in their portrayal of their character?

Comment on the use of the elements of production

Discuss how effective you think the use of sound, lighting, set and costume were in the performance.

Were the costumes suitable for the characters? How did the choice of colours and designs suit the overall look of the performance?

Was the set an effective use of space? Was the set easy for the actors to manoeuvre around? In terms of colour and layout, did its design enhance the performance? How did the elements of production support the directorial concept? Did the signs and symbols used within the production enhance meaning? Was special lighting used at any time for a particular effect? Did the use of live or recorded sound enhance or detract from the performance? How did lighting and sound establish location and create atmosphere?

Conclusion

Sum up the overall success of the play.

Attached below is a *Responding to Live Theatre Worksheet*. It is a way to get students thinking about their live theatre experience and is broken down into sections so they can plot out their ideas easily and simplistically. It can be the beginnings of a review, an essay response or even a short response exam.

Sample Responding Question

Objective: Responding

Task: Review for *Youth Arts Queensland* blog (Extended analytical writing)

Audience: Young people and those who create work with and for them

Word length: 800 - 1000/1000 - 1200 words

Task Details: As a Queensland-based contributing writer to *Youth Arts Queensland* blog, please forward by the due date, a blog about Queensland Theatre Company's *Mother Courage & Her Children*, which was recently performed at the Playhouse Theatre, QPAC. Use the quote below to frame your article.

After a long, hopeless war, people will settle for peace, at almost any price.
SALMAN RUSHDIE

With the titular role of Mother Courage in mind, how does she reflect Mr Rushdie's quote above? Using examples from the text and production elements from the play create a piece of writing which either supports or defies the quote.

I look forward to your submission!

Youth Arts Queensland
Contributing Editors, Queensland

Responding to Live Theatre Worksheet

NAME OF PLAY:

WRITTEN BY:

DIRECTED BY:

ACTORS:

Recommendation:

Why would you recommend this play? Why would it appeal to your target audience?

Narrative:

(Briefly outline the plot in 75 words or less and then evaluate how effectively the play will entertain the audience)

Themes and Issues:

What themes and issues are illuminated in the play? Explain how. What questions are raised for the audience?

Characters:

Why are the characters so engaging? You can elaborate on one character more however you need to address at least 2 of the characters in the play.

Dramatic Tension:

Identify the major tensions in the play that entertain the audience/elaborate on one of the major themes. Analyse two specific examples.

Resources – Need more inspiration?

VIDEO: Meryl Streep
and *Mother Courage*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mz5I1LmLLw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1iAHP68e1Q&feature=endscreen&NR=1>

VIDEO: Brecht
Onstage
Documentary

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAw3IoCbN3U&feature=relmfu>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G09eD34j7rY&feature=relmfu>

ARTICLE: Judi Dench
as *Mother Courage*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/may/02/best-performance-ever-seen-lynn-nottage>

ARTICLE: *Mother
Courage* Basic
Information

<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/mothercourage/facts.html>

WIKIPEDIA: *Mother
Courage & Her
Children*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_Courage_and_Her_Children

ARTICLE: Tony
Kushner talks about
Mother Courage

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/sep/08/tony-kushner-mother-courage>

GUIDE: *Mother
Courage* Study Guide

<http://www.gradesaver.com/mother-courage-and-her-children/>

TEACHERS NOTES:

USQ's 2006
Production of *Mother
Courage & Her
Children*

<http://www.usq.edu.au/artsworx/schoolresources/mothercourage>

STUDY GUIDE:
*Mother Courage &
Her Children*

www.artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/MotherCourage.pdf