



# I, CINNA (THE POET)

BY TIM CROUCH

## QUESTIONS & ISSUES

### ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack contains questions and resources to stimulate discussion about the play *I, Cinna (The Poet)* and issues it raises.

There are more resources for teachers on the *I, Cinna (The Poet)* website including classroom drama activities on both *I, Cinna (The Poet)* and *Julius Caesar*.

### CONTENTS

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Discussion questions     | Page 2 |
| Resource: News story     | Page 3 |
| Resource: YouTube videos | Page 4 |

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was Cinna queuing for bread?  
What does it tell you about the lives of ordinary citizens of Rome?  
How is Caesar's life different from this?
- Cinna says: 'Here, some words are not free. Some words can get you killed. Here, some words can get others killed.' Do you think words are free in the country you live in?  
Can you think of examples of cases where people have been punished for words they have said or written?
- Do you think people should be allowed to write or say anything they want?  
Are there some words that should be banned?
- Cinna calls Mark Anthony's funeral speech 'poetry'. Why does he say this?
- Cinna says: 'The world is changing outside my door. Do I make myself part of that change? What do I do?'  
Think of an incident when you had to decide whether or not to take part in action that was happening near you. What happened? What did you do? Why?
- What three words would you use to describe Cinna's feelings during the events of the play?
- Can you think of real-life events when people have spontaneously taken to the streets to express emotions? What was the event? How did the emotions show themselves?

## RESOURCE: NEWS STORY

### Twitter racism: how the law is taking on the 'Twacists'

Written by Owen Bowcott and Katy Roberts, [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk)  
27 March 2012 (This is an edited version of the original.)

[www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/mar/27/twitter-racism-taking-on-twacists](http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/mar/27/twitter-racism-taking-on-twacists)

A spate of racist comments directed at Premiership footballers and broadcast on Twitter has prompted concerns about use of the social media network.

In the past week, two cases have come to court involving students who sent out offensive messages insulting the former Liverpool striker Stan Collymore and the Bolton Wanderers midfielder Fabrice Muamba, who collapsed during a recent FA Cup tie.

A variety of laws are being used by the Crown Prosecution Service to deal with offenders as police forces move swiftly to deal with high-profile cases.

In the two latest cases, a Newcastle University law student Joshua Cryer, 21, admitted using the social networking site to bombard Collymore with abuse in an attempt to 'snare a celebrity' by provoking a reaction.

He was charged under section 127 of the Communications Act of sending grossly offensive messages, which included racist taunts, to the former England player. He was sentenced to a two-year community order with 240 hours' unpaid work and ordered to pay £150 costs to the court.

Liam Stacey, a 21-year-old biology undergraduate at Swansea University, pleaded guilty to a charge under the Crime and Disorder Act of making racially aggravated comments.

Wendy Williams, head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in the north-east, said: 'When a person makes such comments digitally, they effectively hand police and prosecutors much of the evidence needed to build a robust case against them.'

Collymore, an active campaigner against racism, has been raising awareness of inappropriate remarks on Twitter and played a significant role in the arrest of Stacey. He has tweeted: 'If you see anyone tweeting racist tweets today, or any day, please report them to your local police. They will listen and act. Thank you.'

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) said there had been more than 2000 prosecutions last year under section 127 of the Communications Act. The DCMS said: 'The fundamental principle for internet-hosted material is that what is illegal offline is also illegal online.'

## RESOURCE: YOUTUBE VIDEOS

### 1. Youth bloggers - The Arab Spring

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElpGfC5Vo\\_0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElpGfC5Vo_0) (duration: 3'57")

Voices of youth from four different countries (Bahrain, Yemen, Tunisia and Egypt) speak about their experiences of the Arab Spring, the role of social media and defending human rights.

Questions to consider:

- What role can social media play in challenging political oppression?
- What are the risks and dangers of blogging as political protest?
- What is the relationship between social media and protest on the streets?

### 2. The many sides of Robert Mugabe

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=StNZKr8QF9c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StNZKr8QF9c) (duration 1'59")

Robert Mugabe was damned as a terrorist, then knighted by Queen Elizabeth, and is still in power more than 30 years later. This video is a clip from *Robert Mugabe: What Happened?* For more information about this documentary, visit: <http://bit.ly/J4XWfS>

Questions to consider:

- How can a hero of the people become an oppressor of the people?
- A popular saying is: 'Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.' What does it mean? Do you agree?

### 3. Interviews - Women Activists at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt

<http://youtu.be/FxDGfke09Bw> (duration 2'55")

Young women discuss their reasons for getting involved in political action in Egypt.

Questions to consider:

- What does it mean for women to take political action in countries where they are generally subordinate to men?
- Can protest be empowering?
- Why might parents want to stop their children going on protests? What are they scared of?

#### **4. Flashmob for peace: Anti-NATO protesters play dead ahead of Lisbon summit**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSmOwAreuP4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSmOwAreuP4) (duration 1'16")

Dozens of demonstrators pretended to be dead on the streets of Lisbon, simulating what they say are the devastating effects of a NATO airstrike. Anti-NATO participated in what they called a 'flashmob for peace', outside the Rossio train station, Lisbon, Portugal. The flash-mob protest against the war in Afghanistan was one of many demonstrations during the two-day NATO summit in the Portuguese capital.

Questions to consider:

- One of the comments below the video on YouTube says: 'Yay... we accomplished nothing'. Do you agree?
- In what ways might this protest blur the lines between protest and performance?
- What do protest and performance have in common?

#### **5. Occupy Wall St: May Day**

<http://youtu.be/j3rGnN8hGX4> (duration 2'39")

Video by Chris Ware, 1 May 2012

Hundreds of demonstrators gather in Manhattan locations as part of Occupy Wall Street protests.

- What do you think the 'Occupy' protests have achieved?
- One of the protestors' chants is: 'This is what democracy looks like.' What do you understand by this?