



I, CINNA (THE POET)

BY TIM CROUCH

EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PACK

ABOUT THIS PACK

The activities in this pack are inspired by Tim Crouch's 2012 production of *I, Cinna (The Poet)*. They can be used either as stand-alone practical approaches to this play or as supporting activities for students seeing the production or web broadcast. They have been designed with KS3 students in mind, but can be adapted for other age groups. Some are best suited to an open space such as a hall, but many can be used in a classroom.

ABOUT OUR EDUCATION WORK

We want children and young people to enjoy the challenge of Shakespeare and achieve more as a result of connecting with his work. Central to our education work is our manifesto for Shakespeare in schools, *Stand up for Shakespeare*. We know that children and young people can experience Shakespeare in ways that excite, engage and inspire them. We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare when they:

- Do Shakespeare on their feet - exploring the plays actively as actors do
- See it Live - participate as members of a live audience
- Start it Earlier - work on the plays from a younger age

We also believe in the power of ensemble; a way of working together in both the rehearsal room and across the company enabling everyone's ideas and voices to be heard. Artistic Director, Michael Boyd encapsulates this vision for ensemble in his rehearsal room where actors are encouraged to try out different interpretations of scenes before deciding together on what will be presented to an audience in the final performance.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Contextual notes from the 2012 production, or background info



ACTIVITY

A classroom or open space activity

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES



Cinna becomes the victim of the 'mob mentality' of Rome: caught up in the madness of political assassination and civil war, the people of Rome act in impulsive, violent ways.

The killing of Cinna 'for his bad verses' is a moment where we see the madness and aggression of the mob. These warm-up exercises gives your students a taste of what it's like to be part of a group acting en masse.

ACTIVITY 1: 'YES, LET'S!'



Ask your group to walk around the space.

Explain to them that when the mood strikes someone, they should say loudly, 'I know, let's climb Mount Everest!' (or 'paint the walls', 'swim the channel' etc).

The rest of the group then all say, 'Yes, let's!' and perform the same action.

They carry on performing the action until someone else says, 'I know, let's.....'.

(The onus is on the students to keep the game going!)

ACTIVITY 2: CINNA'S FOOTSTEPS



This warm-up game, played the same way as 'Grandmother's Footsteps', helps the students to feel for themselves what it would be like to be in Cinna's position.

- Ask for one student volunteer to play Cinna.
They stand with their back to the rest of the group, who approach as quietly as possible. The object of the game is to touch Cinna on the shoulder without being seen moving.
- If 'Cinna' can hear movement behind him, he can turn around and try to catch out anyone moving by pointing at them.
- Each time Cinna turns around and points at someone, he says: 'I am Cinna!'
The person being pointed at replies: 'Tear him to pieces!'
Cinna replies: 'I am Cinna the poet.'
The other person replies: 'Tear him for his bad verses.'
They then go to the back of the room and start their approach again.

After the game has been played, ask the class:

- How does it feel to be Cinna?
- How does it feel to be one of the mob?

CHARACTER-BASED ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: FREEZE-FRAME – WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?



This activity encourages students to work in groups to think about what happens in the play and to understand the progression and development of Cinna’s emotions and thoughts during the play.

- Divide students into three groups.
Ask each group to prepare a different ‘freeze-frame’ to represent:
Group 1: Cinna’s feelings at the beginning of the play
Group 2: A key decision Cinna makes during the play
Group 3: What happens at the end of the play
- Players show their freeze-frames to the rest of the group, and introduce themselves in the first person as if they are Cinna.
- Ask characters to speak aloud their thoughts and feelings in the first person to explore motivation and underlying tensions.
- Finally, discuss as a group:
What was Cinna’s key decision?
How and why did his feelings change during the play – what happened?

ACTIVITY 2: LINE OF APPROVAL



This activity is designed to open up questions and areas for further exploration about the key characters. It moves towards the characters’ inner life and psychology.

This is a version of an exercise in the *Julius Caesar* drama activities (see separate PDF). Here, instead of being different characters, all students play Cinna and are asked to respond to statements or questions about Cinna’s feelings and actions during the play. When there is a big difference of opinion, ask why. Encourage class discussion.

- Mark out a line in the room. One end is 0, the other end is 10.
10 = a positive response. Yes I agree strongly. Yes, very much so.
0 = a negative response. No, not at all.
- Every student will play Cinna.
Ask the group a question or a yes/no statement, for example:
‘Should Cinna have gone outside earlier instead of staying in his flat?’
‘It is more important to speak out against injustice than to protect your own safety.’
‘Being a poet is important in times of political unrest.’
In character, and working in silence, they stand on the number that corresponds with their response to the question.

As a variation on this exercise, half of the students can represent Cinna at the beginning of the play, and half at the end, to explore how his feelings and opinions change.

You will need stickers to identify students as ‘Cinna 1’ or ‘Cinna 2’.

Before doing the exercise, you could ask group can devise the questions they want to ask.

RHETORIC ACTIVITIES

RHETORIC: THE ART OF PERSUASION



Rhetoric is not a conversation. Instead of people speaking to each other with mutual feedback, rhetoric is one person trying to convince or impress others. Because there's no interaction, there's a danger that the audience will lose the thread of what is being said, or will lose interest and stop listening. This exercise gets students actively using rhetoric to explore how best to hold the audience's attention and communicate their points.



ACTIVITY 1: CINNA WATCHES TV

- Split the class into two halves. Each group should have a leader.
Group 1 works on Brutus' speech (see page 5)
Group 2 works on Mark Antony's speech (see page 6)
- In each group, ask the students sit in the circle and read the speech, moving on to a new reader with each 'sense phrase' (each new sentence or unit of meaning).
- Ask students to discuss what rhetorical features they can identify in the speech. Give them (or project) the list of 'Rhetorical Features' on page 7.
- Ask students to agree on a set of gestures or actions that signify these features. For example, a gesture meaning 'ladder', a gesture meaning 'three', and so on.
- Ask the students to reread the speech, making the appropriate gesture when any feature occurs.
- Next, divide students into pairs. Ask each pair to read the speech to each other by alternate sense phrase, swapping reader when it feels natural to do so.
- Then repeat this, but this time using the sense phrases in the speech in order to persuade each other of the rightness of what is being said and top each others ideas.
- Still in pairs, ask one student in the pair to read the speech. Their partner is allowed to interrupt with comments or questions at any point. The first student's objective is to continue to speak the speech, not letting the interruptions throw them off course but using the energy of the questions to inform how they speak their speech.
- Finally, ask everyone to return to the larger group (1 or 2).
Ask for one volunteer from each group to read their speech out loud while standing on a chair facing everyone else.
Now, the rest of the players play Cinna, watching the speeches on television.
Cinna should listen to both speeches and then at the end decide which one he found most persuasive.
Take a vote by asking students to stand by the speaker they found most convincing.

BRUTUS' SPEECH

ACT 3 SCENE 1

Be patient till the last.

Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: --Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

MARK ANTONY'S SPEECH

ACT 3 SCENE 1

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men--
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

LIST OF RHETORICAL FEATURES

Ciceronian Triads

Groups of things in threes or 'the rule of three'

For example: 'blood, sweat and tears'; 'friends, Romans, countrymen'

Laddering

Point-by-point reasoning, moving from one point to the next

For example: good/better/best

Metaphor

Speaking about a thing as being that which it resembles

For example, 'he is such an animal'

Irony

Deliberate use of words to mean the opposite of their literal meaning

For example: 'Brutus is an honourable man'

Antithesis

Words or ideas balanced in contrast

For example: best/worse, failure/triumph

Anaphora or Epiphora

Repetition of a word at the beginning (ana-) or end (epi-) of consecutive sentences.

For example, Obama's 'Yes we can'

Hyperbole

Exaggeration

For example: 'a thousand times', 'the world's best...'

Assonance

Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighbouring words.

For example, a slogan for Hoover vacuum cleaners: 'It beats as it sweeps as it cleans'

Alliteration

The initial sounds of a word, beginning either with a consonant or a vowel, repeated in close succession

For example, 'The ragged rascal ran'

Rhetorical questions

Question + answer, or problem + solution

Repetition