



TEACHER PACK

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**TITUS**  
**ANDRONICUS**

## ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Blanche McIntyre. The production opened on 23 June 2017 at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The activities provided are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students attending the performance and studying *Titus Andronicus* in school.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



#### READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



#### ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



#### WRITE

A classroom writing or discussion activity



#### LINKS

Useful web addresses and research tasks

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's most brutal tragedy. In this production, Blanche McIntyre has staged the play in a modern setting, exploring the parallels between the political chaos and search for leadership in 2017 and the period of unrest and change in the Roman Empire we see in this play.

As the play opens, we witness riots and public disturbance as the public votes for a new leader. Instead of choosing one of the political figures put forward they turn instead to the military figure of Titus and as the play unfolds we watch him fall from this position of respect and power.



The Company in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*.  
Photo by Helen Maybanks.

# EXPLORING THE STORY

## NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

**In this first few weeks of rehearsal Blanche and the company worked quickly to get the scenes on their feet, asking key questions about the characters and groups of people in the play and who they were in the modern setting that was being created for the production.**



## SYNOPSIS

A full synopsis of the play is available at:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/titus-andronicus/the-plot>



## ACTIVITY 1: GETTING TO KNOW THE CHARACTERS

*Titus Andronicus* is a play that concentrates on two main families: the Andronicus family, of which Titus is the head, and Tomora's family. Tamora is the Queen of the Goths, taken prisoner with her two sons, who becomes the wife of Saturninus the Roman ruler. These two powerful figures and family heads come up against each other constantly, vowing revenge.

In the following activity students will be able to explore the different characters in the play, looking at the conflicts that exist between them.

- Provide each student with a single character slip and ask them to read the information they have been given.
- Using the description and lines from the text ask them to walk around the room and to find anyone else from their family. Make sure that at least two people have Bassianus and two people have Saturninus. Once they have found the rest of their family they should find a space in the room. There should be three main groups:
  - The Romans
  - The Andronicus family
  - The Royal Goths
- Ask students to look at their group of characters together and to create a family portrait as a freeze frame, using the information they have been given.
  - Remind students that while the characters have been grouped together in 'families' some characters, like Aaron, might be quite separate. Encourage them to show this in their images.
- Encourage each group to then add 30 seconds of movement to their freeze frame, which shows the characters interacting. Emphasise to each group that it's important everyone else can understand who is who from their piece. They may also choose to use one of the lines of text in this short piece of movement.
- Provide the whole group with a list of all the characters and explain they will need to try and identify each of the characters in the freeze frames.
- Allow each group to show their freeze frame once, while the rest of the group watches. As they share their freeze frames, challenge the group to name each of the characters.
- Invite each group to then share their freeze frame again followed by 30 seconds of movement.
- Reflect with students on how the characters interact. What are their predictions for the characters' relationships.

- Remind students that this play is a tragedy. Which of the characters do they think will die in the play and why?

Explain to students that, at the start of the play, several of Titus Andronicus' sons have died in the war against the Goths and when he returns from fighting, with Tamora and her sons as his prisoners, he is already a grieving Father.

## NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

**The production opens with the people of Rome rioting because of their distrust of the leadership. This part of the production was choreographed by the Movement Director using actions and movements that came from the actors. The company spent time looking at the London 2012 riots and other contemporary events to try and capture that same feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction in the opening moments of the play. One character even holds a board saying 'Austerity Kills'. This sense of a public in need of change felt particularly poignant to the creative team and they wanted to find ways of drawing those connections.**

# A CHANGING WORLD

*Titus Andronicus* is set in Rome during a period of great political change, where the citizens themselves aren't sure how they want to be governed and the political leaders of the time don't seem to be trusted with their future.

In this production, Saturninus – who is played by Martin Hutson – is very much seen as a clever and distant modern politician, delivering rehearsed speeches from behind a podium. Against a backdrop of security guards and gates, we see him trying to persuade the people to vote for him. But the people turn instead to an experienced military leader – Titus. You can see these two figures in Act 1 in the images below. Ask students to take a look at these and think about any modern equivalents of Saturninus and Titus; a politician who is very removed and separate and a figure who has no political experience but the people trust their judgement and call for them to take control.

## WAYS TO EXTEND THIS WORK

- You may want to challenge students to think of different movements that remind them of riots or uprisings.
- Ask them to work in groups to put these movements together and to create their own movement sequence, as the company did to help create the production's opening.



Martin Hutson as Saturninus and David Troughton as Titus in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*. Photos by Helen Maybanks.

After seeing the images on the previous page, challenge students to think about how they would have presented Saturninus and Titus in a modern context. How do they think these two men might interact with each other? Do they respect each other's way of working?

Ask students to think about how they would want to vote if faced with these same choices. How do they want to be governed? Can the citizens of Rome in the play be trusted to make these decisions? Can the citizens of our society be trusted to make the decisions now? Why or why not?

For a series of films exploring these ideas, and looking at the responsibility of citizens using Shakespeare's Roman plays visit [www.rsc.org.uk/goodofrome](http://www.rsc.org.uk/goodofrome) Here, students can also watch a series of films exploring different provocations about modern politics – particularly asking whether young people agree or disagree that 'Politics is unfair. It will always be the few making decisions on behalf of the many'. Is this how they feel?

### WAYS TO EXTEND THIS WORK

- A-level students can also take part in the For the Good of Rome film challenge which is open from May 2017 until October 2017. Please see [www.rsc.org.uk/goodofrome/film-challenge](http://www.rsc.org.uk/goodofrome/film-challenge) for details. Students do not need to be film students to take part and can enter independently or as part of a group.



## ACTIVITY 2: POLITICAL UNREST

The play opens with an election of a new leader. The two candidates to lead the Roman people are Saturninus and his brother Bassianus. Saturninus is older and believes he should naturally inherit, like a King would do, and seems angry that they are voting. Both brothers make speeches to persuade the people that they should vote for them.

The following activity will help students to explore the speeches the two men make and consider who they would vote for in this situation.

- Arrange students into two large groups and ask them to stand on opposite sides of the room.
- Provide one group with Bassianus' speech and one group with Saturninus' speech.
- Invite the groups to stand opposite each other in two straight lines. Ask the students with Saturninus' speech to read first, speaking the lines together at the same time. Then, invite the Bassianus groups to do the same, reading his lines together at the same time.
- Allow both groups to reflect on what they think the most effective and convincing speech was, based on their initial impressions.
- Ask one student from the Saturninus group to stand in the middle of the room on a chair with everyone else sat around them. Encourage them to read the speech again, pausing at each punctuation mark. While they read, invite the rest of the group to:
  - Stand up and sit down again each time he makes a logical argument for why he should be the ruler of the empire.
  - Murmur or call out 'here, here' each time he says something that makes them proud to be Roman or makes them feel like he understands them.
  - Clap each time he reminds them of who he is.

After trying this once you might want to repeat it, with students listening and watching rather than reading along as they become more familiar with it.



Martin Hutson as Saturninus in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*. Photo by Helen Maybanks.



Dharmesh Patel as Bassianus in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*. Photo by Helen Maybanks.

- Invite a student from the Bassianus group to then repeat the same exercise, asking students to think about how different the two speeches are.
- Reflect with students on which speech featured more logical arguments, which appealed to their emotions most and which made themselves seem like the best person for the job. What was the main focus of Saturninus' argument? What was the main focus of Bassianus' argument? Which do they think was more effective?
- At the RSC we will often experiment in the rehearsal room with different audiences as well, trying speeches like this with a responsive audience but also how they might work as a television broadcast, or with the speaker sat down among the people instead of standing up on a chair. During rehearsal for this production the company also experimented with using a microphone, thinking about who uses it and at what stage. How do students think these speeches should be delivered?
- Explain to students that following these speeches the people do not choose either leader, they turn to Titus Andronicus instead and want him to be their leader. Instead, he chooses Saturninus on their behalf.

Titus Andronicus does not take control when the people call for him to, but instead nominates Saturninus anyway. Ask students whether this was the right thing to do? Why might Titus have made this move? Does it show strength or weakness of character?

## FAMILY AND REVENGE

### NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

**During the early stages of the rehearsal process Blanche was keen to look at the question of who the Goths are. At the time in which the play is set, the Goths were a nomadic people rather than having one army, and the company explored the idea of refugees as a modern equivalent. Tamora is the Queen of these people so she moves from an exalted position to one of being a prisoner and the cast and creatives spent time exploring what this would mean.**



### ACTIVITY 3: FAMILY, HONOUR AND REPUTATION

In the first few scenes of the play Tamora's status and importance changes dramatically. In the first scene Tamora is a prisoner of war and by the third scene she is the wife of the Emperor. The way she is treated and treats others is very different in both. In this activity students will explore the ways this change can be staged as well as comparing Tamora and her rival Titus.

- Provide students with the edited copies of Act 1 Scene 1 extract 1 and Act 1 Scene 1 extract 2.
- Arrange students into groups of five.
- Ask each group to identify three things an actor could do, with their movement, that would show that they are a prisoner and are surrounded by enemies. Encourage the groups to write these things down, then ask them to answer the question: how might they react to the person who captured them if they were in the room?
- Ask each group to then write down three things an actor could do, with their movement, that would show they are royalty/part of the Emperor's family and are surrounded by their own guards and people. Then, ask them to answer the same question; how might they react to the person who captured them if they were in the room?
- Invite students to then look at the short scene extracts in their groups.
- Encourage each group to create a short performance of extract 1 and then extract 2, using their notes on Tamora's movements.

- Remind each group that Titus is her captor and that her status and the way she behaves towards him should be completely different in each scene: he has gone from being her tormentor to one of her subjects. How would you treat him if you were her? How do you think he feels about that?
  - For students who know the play, it's also worth thinking about whether Titus regrets saying that Saturninus should be Emperor. What is going through his head in these moments, as well as those of his family and Tamora's?
- Allow each group to perform their versions of extract 1 and then their versions of extract 2.
- Reflect with students on the key differences between the scenes. How has each group shown the shift in her status? How have they shown the shift in Titus' status?
- Share with the groups that, in the production, Tamora makes Titus kiss her shoe in the third scene to show that she is in control once she has married Saturninus. This is humiliating for Titus. How do you think he feels after this event? What would you do next if you were him? What if you were her?



## ACTIVITY 4: THE FALL OF A FAMILY

Tamora's family slowly destroys Titus' family during the play. Her sons, urged by Aaron, assault Lavinia and Titus' sons then lose their heads when Aaron frames them for Bassianus' murder.

All of these actions see the Andronicus family fall from the greatly respected military dynasty they are at the start to a disgraced family, with most of its members dead or in exile.

To help visualise this change, the production uses the Andronicus' family table to show their fall. On the table during Act 3 Scene 2, we see simple food and basic plates, to show how they have become poor and forgotten.



David Troughton as Titus in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*. Photo by Helen Maybanks.

- Challenge students to think about how they could show some of the changes, using different designs. Ask them to create a costume design for Titus as he is at the start of the play in his full glory and then how he is in this scene. Remind them to think about:
  - His social position; what the Emperor thinks of him
  - His family; who has he lost and what does it mean to him? At the start, is he proud and how can you show it?
  - His experiences; he has served in the military for a long time. Does he completely let this go? For example, in the image above you can see that Titus is still wearing parts of his uniform as though he finds it hard to let go of them.

# VIOLENCE AND TRAGEDY



## ACTIVITY 6: STAGING THE IMPOSSIBLE

In *Titus Andronicus* there are a number of gruesome events which seem almost impossible to stage. A lot of discussion during rehearsal focused on how these events could be done on stage. For example, how would you stage:

- Titus' hand being cut off

- Tamora being served a pie that has her own sons in it



David Troughton as Titus and Nia Gwynne as Tamora in the 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*. Photos by Helen Maybanks.

The audience has to see and understand what is happening so it has to be clear, but at the same time it has to be believable on stage and help to tell the story. When Tamora and the other characters eat the pie, for instance, there are also very practical things to think about – such as making it out of something edible that the actors can eat.

- Ask students to think about any other moments in the play that they think would be difficult to stage or to make believable. Can they think of any ways to stage them? How would they set about staging the two moments above?

One of the other key moments that is difficult to believe on stage is when Tamora dresses herself as 'Revenge' in order to make Titus behave the way she wants. The company spent a lot of time talking about what revenge might look like. A lot of this discussion included ideas around the design of the production, just like the moments above.

- Ask students to think about how they would dress Tamora to look like 'Revenge'? Provide them with a sheet of paper for them to collect images or draw sketches as a 'mood board' or inspiration collage for her costume, explaining that this is the early part of a design process – gathering ideas that can be shared and used as inspiration.
- Explain to students that Tamora makes this decision to try and convince Titus to do what she wants saying:

'I will encounter with Andronicus  
And say I am Revenge, sent from below'

The way she dresses has to be something she thinks will convince Titus, so encourage students to think about everything they know about him. What does he like? What does he admire? What kind of figure would he listen to? A lone figure, or one with support? Someone strong or someone clever? How could that be conveyed in a costume? How can they show the idea of vengeance in a single character but also make it believable that he might believe it/listen to it?

- Invite students to share their ideas and suggestions for how they might design a character dressed as 'Revenge'. Why have they made the choices they have?
- In the 2017 production the company decided that Titus seems to be obsessed with the past and classical stories as well as military might and strength, so Tamora dresses in a gold breast plate to try and remind him of those things – appealing to him.
- The company also spent time discussing the question: what is 'revenge'? Ask students to think about what they think it means. Several characters in this play seek it out; is it different for each of them?

# RESOURCES

## CHARACTER INSIGHTS

### The Romans

<b>Bassianus</b>	The younger brother of Saturninus, Bassianus feels that the people of Rome would be better off being led by him than by his brother – that they should have the right to choose. He is in love with Lavinia and wishes to marry her despite her father wanting her to marry Saturninus.
<b>Saturninus</b>	The eldest son of the last Emperor, Saturninus feels it is his right to rule Rome. When his brother Bassianus challenges his right he is angry, but is chosen to rule by Titus and becomes Emperor. As he takes over, he wants to marry Lavinia, but she announces that she wants to marry Bassianus instead.

### The Andronicus Family

<b>Titus Andronicus</b>	A celebrated war leader and military figure. The head of a large and well respected noble family in Rome, he has just returned from fighting the Goths and has lost several of his sons in battle. Titus is so beloved by the people that they choose him to lead them rather than the politicians who want their votes.
<b>Marcus Andronicus</b>	Titus' brother and a Tribune, or government official, in Rome. Unlike the rest of the family he is not a soldier and is not a violent person. He is a very rational and reasoned man and supports his brother and family through everything.
<b>Lucius</b>	Titus' eldest son and heir, Lucius has just returned from fighting the Goths with his Father. He is fiercely protective of his sister Lavinia and is loyal to his father and his family. He is a strong leader.
<b>Lavinia</b>	Titus' only daughter. Her Father expects her to marry Saturninus, the eldest son of the last Emperor but she is in love with Bassianus his

	younger brother and is determined to marry him instead, despite her father's wishes.
<b>Mutius</b>	Titus' son who returns from fighting the Goths with his father only to be killed by Titus himself. Titus kills him for dishonouring the family when he defends Lavinia for marrying Bassianus in the first scene of the play.
<b>Quintus</b>	Titus' son who has just returned from fighting the Goths with his Father. He is fiercely protective of his sister Lavinia and is loyal to his father and his family.
<b>Martius</b>	Titus' son who has just returned from fighting the Goths with his Father. He is fiercely protective of his sister Lavinia and is loyal to his father and his family.
<b>Young Lucius</b>	Lucius' young son and Titus' grandson.

## The Royal Goths

<b>Tamora</b>	The Queen of the Goths, Tamora is taken prisoner by Titus before the play starts. She is secretly in love with Aaron but her sons don't know. Her eldest son Alarbus is killed by the Romans and she is determined to get revenge, with the help of her sons and Aaron.
<b>Chiron</b>	Tamora's son, he is determined to avenge the murder of his brother Alarbus. He has a competitive relationship with his brother Demetrius and listens to Aaron's advice.
<b>Demetrius</b>	Tamora's son, he is determined to avenge the murder of his brother Alarbus. He has a competitive relationship with his brother Chiron and listens to Aaron's advice.
<b>Aaron</b>	Tamora's lover, Aaron is very secretive and persuasive. He is able to convince Tamora's sons to abuse Lavinia during the play and also frames Titus' sons for killing Bassianus.

## **ACT 1 SCENE 1 Extracts**

### **The Opening Speeches**

#### **SATURNINUS**

Noble patricians, patrons of my right,  
Defend the justice of my cause with arms,  
And, countrymen, my loving followers,  
Plead my successive title with your swords:  
I am his first-born son, that was the last  
That wore the imperial diadem of Rome;  
Then let my father's honours live in me,  
Nor wrong mine age with this indignity.

#### **BASSIANUS**

Romans, friends, followers, favorers of my right,  
If ever Bassianus, Caesar's son,  
Were gracious in the eyes of royal Rome,  
Keep then this passage to the Capitol  
And suffer not dishonour to approach  
The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,  
To justice, continence and nobility;  
But let desert in pure election shine,  
And, Romans, fight for freedom in your choice.

## **ACT 1 SCENE 1 Extract 1**

### **Tamora and Titus**

#### **LUCIUS**

Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths -

#### **TITUS ANDRONICUS**

I give him you, the noblest that survives,  
The eldest son of this distressed queen.

#### **TAMORA**

Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,  
A mother's tears in passion for her son:  
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,

O, think my son to be as dear to me!  
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge:  
Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

## TITUS ANDRONICUS

Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.  
These are their brethren, whom you Goths beheld  
Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain  
Religiously they ask a sacrifice:  
To this your son is mark'd, and die he must,  
To appease their groaning shadows that are gone.

## ACT 1 SCENE 1 Extract 2 Tamora and Titus

### TAMORA

- At my suit, look graciously on him;

*Aside to SATURNINUS*

I'll find a day to massacre them all  
And make them know what 'tis to let a queen  
Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain.

*Aloud*

Come, come, sweet emperor; come, Andronicus;  
Take up this good old man, and cheer the heart  
That dies in tempest of thy angry frown.

### SATURNINUS

Rise, Titus, rise; my empress hath prevail'd.

### TITUS ANDRONICUS

I thank your majesty, and her, my lord:  
These words, these looks, infuse new life in me.

### TAMORA

Titus, I am incorporate in Rome,  
A Roman now adopted happily,  
And must advise the emperor for his good.  
This day all quarrels die, Andronicus;

And let it be mine honour, good my lord,  
That I have reconciled your friends and you.