



REBECCA CLARKE'S *UNSPOKEN*

by Mathew Clausen

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1. Classroom Context

Unspoken provides many opportunities for students to explore a range of learning activities. This play is a crafting of personal story as dramatic form and incorporates many of the theatrical techniques and conventions of contemporary monodrama. *Unspoken* provides wonderful opportunities for teachers to address syllabus outcomes for English and Drama. In particular, senior students of Drama will find this play beneficial as enrichment material for their study of core content areas, including assessment tasks that focus on individual performance. The learning activities in these notes provide many opportunities for practical work and discussion that explore the core themes of family, love, identity and childhood. These notes have been prepared by drama educator, Mathew Clausen.

2. Performance Event Description

Memories are the fabric of this touching and inspiring play. Written and performed by Rebecca Clarke and directed for the 2006 tour by Teresa Bell, with the assistance of original director Wayne Blair, *Unspoken* explores a personal journey. The narrative of the play is about Rebecca's struggle to find love and self. This inner journey is set against the backdrop of her struggle to come to terms with her family and her disabled brother who was diagnosed at eight months old with epilepsy, scoliosis and cerebral palsy, rendering him severely disabled.

This autobiographical nature of the play creates a revealing and insightful glimpse into the complexity of emotions that confront

individuals when challenged by life's experiences. Through the use of vivid imagery, told in verse and expressive physical theatre, Rebecca takes the audience on an exploration of the terrain of her heart. The tension of this play is built on a young woman's exuberant and tempestuous search for love as she tries to escape a reality she cannot avoid. While some of her experiences lead to dead ends and failed relationships, Rebecca discovers that the key to inner freedom and deep love lies in her own truth and not in the world outside her.

The technique of frank and direct audience address, delivered in an energetic, lyrical and symbolic performance style, creates a visceral theatrical statement of personal experience. While the events of the performance are about Rebecca's life, the audience easily empathises with her recollections. It feels as though this story could be about your own adolescent struggle to find self and to make sense of the inescapable, invisible and resilient bonds of family.

3. Enrichment Activities

The following activities are designed to help students explore the themes and issues of the play while developing performance skills.

Activity 1: Family Tableaux

Related Subject Areas: Drama

1.1 In this activity your students will create three frozen pictures or tableaux to represent their perspectives of family. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Ask the groups to discuss and create three different families they would like to show in tableaux. A list of possible situations is provided below. Encourage your students to consider how family structure can be influenced

by number of siblings, marital status of the parents, gender of the family members, cultural heritage, socio-economic background, geographic location etc. Remind your students that the purpose of drama is not to stereotype others. This does not mean that the tableaux cannot be entertaining. Ask the groups to number their tableaux from one to three.

Use the following suggested events or locations to help the group give the tableaux a situation and focus. Your students may have other ideas. Body language and facial expression will be very important to help communicate character and character reaction.

- Mothers' or fathers' day
- A significant cultural or religious occasion
- The arrival of a new baby
- A family picnic in the rain
- Meeting son/daughter's new partner
- Meeting Mum or Dad's new partner

1.2 On your instructions, each group forms a frozen picture of their family. Repeat this step until the group has shown all three tableaux.

1.3 View each group's tableaux. Discuss with the class the strong features of the tableaux in terms of use of space, levels, focus of the performers, use of body language and facial expression, clarity of image. Also discuss some of the similarities and differences between the tableaux.

Activity 2: Family Reflection

Related Subject Areas: English and Drama

In this activity your students will create a representation of their family. They will also reflect on their identity in relation to their family.

2.1 Ask your students to use drawing, painting, digital images, photos, magazine tear sheets, colours, words and symbols to create a visual representation of their family. Divide your students into pairs. Each member of the pair discusses and explains their representation to their partner. The partner must listen quietly for the first few minutes and can then ask for further information or clarifying questions.

2.2 Ask your students to create a new representation on a separate page or piece of paper. In this version they will focus on representing their individual identity. Once again encourage your students to use a variety of visual

resources to complete their representation. Divide the students into pairs. Each pair discusses and explains their representation.

2.3 Ask your students to compare their representations of family and of self using the following questions as a guideline:

- How am I like my family?
- How am I not like my family?
- What is the greatest influence my family has had on me?
- What is the greatest influence I have had on my family?
- What do I find annoying about my family?
- What do I love about my family?
- My family embarrasses me when....
- I have been proud of my family or a family member when...
- I look most like my because.....
- I wish my family was.....
- I wish I was.....
- What sort of home does your family live in and where is it located?
- How does your family celebrate major occasions like birthdays and Christmas?
- How does your family deal with conflict?
- How does your family show they value each other?
- How do the individuals in your family express independence but also contribute to the family unit?

Activity 3: Researching *Unspoken*

Related Subject Areas: English, Drama

In this activity your students will research the performer/ writer's background and some aspects of the performance style. They will need to download the video and audio mpegs from the website to complete the following activity.

3.1 Ask your students to visit the following website: www.rebeccaclarke-unspoken.com

Provide your students with the following questions to help them explore the website:

1. Describe the look of the website. Why do you think the designers of the website chose this particular look?
2. Go to the background link. Read the text on this page.

3. What is Rebecca's intention as a performer?
4. How old was she when her brother was born?
5. What disability was her brother born with?
6. What did Rebecca say about going to university and what did this mean for her relationship with her family?
7. What personal purpose is the writing and performing of *Unspoken* achieving for Rebecca?

3.2 Ask your students to watch the video and listen to the interview they have downloaded from the *Unspoken* website. Discuss with your students the style of the production. They may need to draw on their understanding of dramatic forms and theatrical style covered in class.

3.3 Ask your students to read the following interview. The interview provided could be prepared as a performance where two students play interviewer and interviewee. More students could be involved in this activity by asking several pairs to prepare two or three questions and answers to perform to the class as though in a live interview.

INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA CLARKE

1. What is your background in theatre and acting?

I completed a Bachelor of Arts, Acting, at Queensland University of Technology in 1997. Previous to that I'd studied Speech & Drama privately and at school, since the age of about eight.

2. Describe one or two key moments from your past that helped you realise that theatre/writing/performing was what you wanted to pursue as a career.

I didn't have a TV until I was a teenager, so books and radio were a real source of comfort and escape. I loved that type of communication. I remember lying on our lounge room floor and listening to 'Macca on a Sunday morning' or Simon and Garfunkel records. That was my parents' world and, as daggy and adult as it may seem, I loved it.

I also remember being a young child and getting up on stage in front of a room full of people to do a poem by some really great Australian poet (Judith Wright, Jack Davis, Gwen Harwood, Bruce Dawe etc.) and feeling that it was

the place where I was meant to be. I used to do the Biloela Eisteddfod – that was the thing that I headed towards every year. It was the icing on the cake. I was also lucky that I had an encouraging, insightful teacher who rewarded me for my individuality, so I always had an impetus to keep finding new things to say and deeper chords to strike.

Getting into Queensland University of Technology was a key moment as well, as that was when I realised that my love of the stage was shared by other people who wanted to practice their skills to a professional level.

When I experienced the reality of the Industry (98% unemployment is *not* an unkind myth and *no-one* is spared weeks or months or years of joblessness!), I understood that, to be the artist I wanted to be, I also needed to be a writer in order to create my own work. Most actors that I know have only survived because they are also writing, singing, designing, directing, producing or being creative in some other way. It's easier to consider a life in acting when you have other skills that keep you growing inside of the creative arts industry. Beyond these pragmatic reasons, I also feel much closer to my truth when I am writing. *Unspoken* has taught me that. However, for me, my extended focus and training in acting was an essential thing for my path. There's so much to be learnt, and now writing is a whole new world – but one within the same realm of 'communication'.

3. Why do you think theatre is an important art form?

'Important' is a funny word to use for theatre, because it has such serious, reverent implications, but I understand what the question means and I whole-heartedly believe that theatre is essential and invaluable. We would be much poorer without it. If theatre didn't exist we'd have to find other ways to get lots of different people together to have a communion of shared hopes and disappointments. Sport's the closest other example of that type of thing!

I think theatre is at its best when it strives to be what it was always meant to be (in my view!) – a playing out of a story, for the purpose of either celebrating or questioning who we are as people and as relating beings, either in intimate relationships, families or societies. Theatre's

fantastic because it can be so specific and so universal. It can be a healing balm or an internal earthquake to dislodge what's hidden just that bit deeper inside of us. Maybe it's even a good thing when it doesn't try to be 'important'. Sometimes it suffers for that, in that it starts to be perceived as inaccessible for a bigger audience. Maybe all good story-telling should strive to put being 'true' in front of being 'important'.

4. What was the inspiration for writing *Unspoken*?

The whole thing began as the dissection of a broken relationship. I was devastated at the loss of something I thought pivotal to my survival. I wanted to remember 'love', so as to honour it and not feel so alone and so disempowered in the world. Someone said to me 'Write about what you fear most'. I think that what I feared most at the time was that love was random and meaningless and that I was a person incapable of loving myself or anyone else. I had very little about my family in there until much later when I realised that to look at love I needed to look at where I'd come from – to find something deeper that I'd missed along the way.

5. What is the significance of the title?

Strangely, the title was there long before the story or anything else. First it arose because I felt 'unspoken' in the world, held back by my fears, and later I realised that there were many more levels to the title. In fact, I think the title was an unconscious indicator of the places I would need to go to tell the story... That, in fact, I would need to say things I had not previously said for fear of hurting the people I loved or being judged as wrong, cruel or selfish. Truth was, it was me that was judging myself and stopping my honest feelings.

My brother can't speak, so there's also an element of that in there. Everything he says comes to me through unspoken language. At the deepest level, possibly the things that we most need to communicate and hear are actually 'unspeakable', in other words, they are feelings and concepts so large and profound that there are no words for them. Such is love. It's beyond words.

We've got hung up on quick, easy words and megabytes of information, but there's a real relief in the space around words and the space around lives, where the communication of a bigger truth

occurs. Sometimes we underestimate what's communicated in a clear true gesture, an image or a presence.

6. What styles of performance influenced the writing of your script and why?

I didn't make any conscious choices for the writing style, but I'd say that my early background in reading, writing and performing poetry had a huge influence. I love poetry because it's so reliant on the articulation of images to create feelings; something that I think is very effective in a theatre space. It's almost like trying to press an image against a person's soul so they can feel what you've felt. Best of all, they're free to find their own way in. They're not being dictated or lectured to. Through poetry the audience has freedom to go on their own journey into a world. If they take the time and have the listening, openness and patience, they may reap a rich reward, much richer for the fact that they've discovered it for themselves.

7. What are the key messages of the play from your perspective?

It's difficult to look at your own work from the perspective of 'message', as I think this is something that is up to the audience to discover for themselves. In terms of what I learnt from writing and telling the story, I think that I now understand that love is about giving, rather than receiving and that no matter what you dream or imagine, the only way to live life is to enter it and be as honest as possible in each moment. I also feel that love speaks across enormous divides and that it has a persistent message for a heart that's ready to hear it. I also tried to write a lot about breathing and starting 'new', as breath, touch and watching are great ways to enter the truth of a situation. These are things that I continue to learn every day.

8. Outline the process you went through to develop your play from idea to performance.

The title, *Unspoken*, came to me long before anything else, arriving in 2001 in my 'morning pages' (an exercise in Julia Cameron's *Artist's Way*). Two years later I wrote a 50-page poem about a break-up and shared it in my lounge room with friends. In 2004 I took *Unspoken* to the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and worked with Peter Matheson to explore and shape the story. He asked me a key question that would

change my understanding of the work and take it to another level, 'Can you tell me about your brother?' This kick-started what was to be an agonizing and profound exploration of feelings that I had never addressed before. Following this, I had some invaluable script help from many people, including organisations like Playworks, whose advice brought greater objectivity, clarity and imagination to my story telling. It's important for people to understand that the story is inspired by my experience, rather than being a literal representation of events and people.

Wayne Blair, an old friend and fellow actor from Q.U.T. came onboard as Director and we resolved that the story would be moved from page to stage, no matter what. He helped me to get the piece from something written and poetic into something suitable for a theatre space. We cut a lot and I re-wrote to find stronger events and 'more about my brother' as the love-story was stronger and stood to overpower the family story. The creative team dropped in their seamless, intuitive magic and *Unspoken* opened at the Old Fitzroy Theatre in Woolloomooloo in April 2005. My heart was in my mouth, on my sleeve, and spilling out across the floor! I will never forget the night my parents and extended family came and sat there in the dark, unsure of what it was they were about to watch. I had to call on all my strength to get through that performance. It's difficult to describe how relieved and overcome I felt when I saw them standing to applaud at the end of the show.

9. What were the biggest challenges on this journey?

Because the work started as very personal poetry, I found I needed a lot of outside help to remove myself and find objectivity to start to make a stronger narrative and eventually fictionalise events. As with anything, fear was an enormous presence at many points in the process. I spent a long time avoiding emotional truths and being reluctant to confront particular things in the story that made me feel truly vulnerable.

I had to learn to recognise that part of myself that needed to please others and prove myself. When this surfaced, I had to remind myself what I was doing, and why.

I hit a few blocks when I started to work towards getting the play produced. The venue I

really wanted to perform in turned the play down and for a while I thought that it just wouldn't happen. What I didn't understand was that if these things need to happen, they will, it just may not be in the way one first envisages. The venue where I eventually performed the piece ended up being perfect. I had to continue to trust that everything would work out in its own way, particularly as I brought more people in to the production, such as my set, lighting and sound designer. I ended up being very lucky, as everyone who contributed was highly skilled and very sensitive to the needs of the piece. It became much better when I let go of trying to control everything and trusted that the essence of the play lived if I was true to myself and had faith in the form and the audience.

10. What advice would you give to actors who wish to create a solo performance?

Firstly, you probably have to be pretty keen to communicate with a live audience. I've acted with other people and in this solo context and there's something so different and open about being on stage on your own. It's raw and vulnerable and it demands honesty. If you're willing to be exposed in that way, you're ready to start. Even your writing can start there, as if every word is being feed into a big, invisible listening audience. This will change what you say and how you say it. You're directly taking the audience with you, so it's good to state how you want the audience to feel, where you want them to go and why they should go with you.

When you start telling the story, it's likely that the first thing you write down will not be the thing that is at the true heart of the piece. It's a big lesson as a writer to understand that you write your way *through* to truth. Don't fall in love with your writing. If you do, you may find yourself rejecting what may be invaluable feed-back from an outside eye; an editor, director, test audience or friend. Instead, fall in love with the story that's trying to find its way out and the 'audience' who are listening.

If you write from your big fears and joys you're likely to find yourself addicted to the writing process and you'll go back to it, even if you leave it for weeks or months or years. That's ok. But eventually, all that can really be done is the writing. Thinking or talking about it is just

procrastination. That's fear. That's ok. But just get back to the page.

Don't assume the audience will go with you. Write to hook them and keep them engaged. Remember that they love to be active and work things out for themselves. Later, a good editor will help you remove the over-stated, the repetitious, the self-conscious and the un-believable, but don't try to do that for yourself as you're writing. Go as far in as you can, so that later you can find the jewel of truth at the heart of it. Be focused on the process and forget about any expectations you have for yourself or your writing. Turn off the internal critic and just write because you love to play and communicate. Mostly, have a clear intention towards your audience. Give them what you'd like to receive.

Finally, find great 'outside help' for your script – dramaturgs (editors) who inspire you to continue, a director who is skilled and passionate, a well-connected, experienced producer and a clever, talented team of production artists to design the work. Make sure the work is seen by someone, somewhere, and that you treat the process as a way to grow, not as the be all and end all. Enjoy it! Oh, and see theatre, read theatre, be theatre!

11. What are your future plans for writing and/or performance?

I've been writing with a group of actors and writers. We've been sharing stories and want to write from what feels pressing for us. We've created a process whereby we share on a weekly basis in order to eventually create a collaborative work for theatre.

Aside from that, I've spoken with different artistic directors about what it is that I need to write next. I'm finding how to evolve from something that's solo and personal to something with other dimensions, whether that is more players or a different form, such as a mixed-discipline piece, where a poetic voice can be explored, or a straight dialogue piece with a poetic tone.

Essentially, I'd like to go further into the issues that feel vital for me: Love, fear, truth, family, relationships and the natural world. It's all a bit of a mystery until I find the time and courage to sit down at the page again. I'll be on the road with *Unspoken* through July and August and back in

Sydney for a return season in September, so really I need to focus there until that's done and gently start working some new ideas on the side.

It's all unknown and mysterious and all I can do is step off from where I'm at. I also want to continue telling other people's stories as an actor, and I hope to get more work there. It'd be bliss to play in someone else's story for a while and to work with (gasp!) other actors!

12. What advice would you give to actors performing your piece when ... working in the Form/Style?

When sharing *Unspoken* with an audience it's important to first have a vision of *who* that audience might be. My director, Wayne, got me to imagine that I was in a backyard with extended families, aunts and uncles etc., and that I wanted to share a story with them. Random objects around me were the tools for my story-telling. I grabbed things, they transformed, and as so on as I dropped them they returned to their original form – pillows, sheets, bags, not much, nothing complicated – it was all about making sure the audience felt the story and could see it in little true, intense moments. For this reason, it's essential that the performer comes out and really connects to and finds the audience, in whatever space they're in. We're storytelling. Sometimes the performer will be a narrator, painting pictures with words, and at other times they'll enter a moment so the audience can see exactly what was being felt back then.

Things happen pretty quickly in some parts of the text and the performer needs to, firstly, be very clear about where the transitions are and, secondly, be willing to go for it emotionally, then drop it, to continue the story-telling and keep the rhythm and pace moving.

What advice would you give actors performing your piece, when working in the Text?

Recently I needed to go back to the text, so I had to find a way to approach it as if for the first time. I sat down with my tour director, Teresa, and we marked out beats (points where the action changes), found intentions (why is it being said – what I want to 'do' to the audience) and marked the end of thoughts, so that I would break any stuck or repetitious rhythms (forget the poetry for a second and think of what's being said).

This was a great way to work, as it sharpened up

the different beats and made me create actions towards the audience. Teresa also asked me to spend time with the words and pick out the ones where pitch, tone or weight could change. There's an example below, where I've chosen a Beat and named the Intention, marked the end of thoughts with [/], and **highlighted** the words where a muscular choice would made them more exciting. The 'doing' words and the resonant images are important. This was all in the context of play, just to inform the performance.

Intention: After the very first Beat of the play, where I let the audience into my most personal dreams and desires to set-up that this is going to be an open sharing and that I'll probably get vulnerable at points, I now go on to ask the audience to 'play' with me. An invitation to begin a joyful adventure ... Back to when I was a kid and it was good.

I've been deep in dreaming.../
but I see the **cold dark** coming cross the
valley
from high above my big backyard on the bow
of **my dad's boat** /
I don't have time to pull my shoes on /
I **scamper** cross the holding beams
Jump out and **hit the sandblast** in bare feet /
The earth is **crunching** as I **run** /
I **run** to where the brown grass turns to green /
Dodge trap-door spider holes
leap bark round the gums /

My feet **freeze** /, I wanna **pee** /
Something **tickles** up my ankle
Sharp fingers in the blackness /
But I see the **warm lights** in the bedrooms of
our cabin /
I can **taste** the steak and veggies /
I'M COMING HOME MUM AND DAD
I'M COMING HOME!'
My heart **bursts** for the final metre /
The nighttime **swoops its paw and falters** /
The grass is **softer** on my feet now /
One bare toe, I'm on the pavers /
and I **breathe** again
I **breathe** again /

Dad finishes his beer /
Mum stands at the end of the verandah /
The three of us go in together
cross the **carpet**

to the **cold tiles**
of our **kitchen** /

And that's when she tells me she's **pregnant** /

Performers should feel free to play with the spacing between thoughts. It's important that they trust the rhythm at the heart of the piece and let that drive them. However, the connection to audience and a sense of really wanting to share a story is the most pivotal thing to remember. Reading other Narrative Poetry aloud might also help with feeling how this type of communication works.

What advice would you give actors performing your piece, when working in the Themes?

I wasn't sure if I should go into this, as I trust that most performers have great empathy and imagination, so I hate to tell grandma how to suck eggs!

I'll leave all of the romance and adolescence stuff alone, as that's the more common experience, but I will talk quickly about 'the brother' and how to approach that relationship. It might be tempting to be over-sentimental about this relationship, (I know I have been at times!) but it's really important that if a performer is acting scenes involving the brother, they make choices that are real to their experience. In other words, if you have a sibling, what have *they* done that has made you feel angry, disappointed, sad, happy, loving, embarrassed or confused? When have you felt left out in the cold, because your sibling was getting all your parents' attention? The feelings that affect your sibling relationships are the same as what effects mine with my brother. Sure, we have greater obvious physical obstacles, so far as what my brother is capable of communicating or doing in the world, but really the human relationship remains the same. The love and the hard stuff remain the same. In the end, he's just my brother.

You might also like to explore disability in more depth, as I've painted my brother from one specific direction, so as to enhance the story-telling, but there's a much richer world there waiting to be found. 'Siblings' by Kate Strohms is a great book about the specifics of this kind of relationship.

Activity 4: Physical Theatre

Related Subject Areas: Drama

4.1 The following exercises are to assist your students in preparing for any physical work in subsequent activities. The exercises are by no means exhaustive and you are encouraged to add your own warm up exercises to the ones provided.

Align Posture

Stand with your eyes closed. Check your posture so that your stomach is pulled in slightly, your shoulders are relaxed, your feet are under your hips and are parallel. Check your head is not tipped forward or backward.

Spine Rolls

Complete four spine rolls. One over eight counts, one over four counts one over two counts and in one count. Repeat three times. Remember to keep shoulders and neck loose and bend the knees as much as you need to so that the upper torso can hang forward without straining your lower back.

Neck Stretch

Stand with a relaxed and aligned posture. Bring one arm up above your head. Drop the arm from the elbow so that the hand is on one side of your head. Leave your other arm by your side but push down with the heel of the hand while raising the fingers upwards. As you push down with the heel of one hand, simultaneously pull your head gently to one side to stretch your neck. Relax and repeat using the opposite side.

Wrist and Shoulder Warm Up

Begin by waving both hands from the wrist so they are loose and floppy. Place your left hand on your left shoulder and your right hand on your right shoulder so that your elbows point forwards. In this position, loosen your shoulders by rotating your arms five times in each direction.

Hold both arms out to either side. Raise your hands from the wrists then relax them. Drop your hands from the wrists. Repeat each version quickly six times then relax.

Cat stretch

On all fours form a table shape. Make sure your wrists are under your shoulders and that your middle finger is pointing forward. Turn the inside of your elbows slightly to face each other. Keep

your hands flat and push down into the floor with your fingertips. Make sure your thighs are under your hips and your knees are not too close together. Keeping your stomach firm. Using the full motion of your spine, slowly arch your back like a cat and hold for a moment. Return to the table position. Now drop your stomach and raise your head to look at the ceiling. Hold for a moment and return to the table position. Slowly look over your left shoulder behind you and repeat on the right hand side. Relax.

4.2 Once your students have completed a physical warm up ask them to practice the following:

- Create balances in pairs. This can be achieved by standing toe to toe with hands held in a monkey grip. Using the tension of the arms, slowly lean away from your partner until your arms are at full length.
- Stand side by side. Hold hands with you partner and using the tension in your arms slowly lean away from your partner and stretch out your outside arm to create better balance.
- Sit on the floor back to back with your knees up and the heels of your feet a short distance from your body. Link arms at the elbow. Using the muscular contraction in your legs, push your feet into the floor and press your backs against each other. Come to a standing position. Slowly return to the floor in a seated position.

4.3 Ask your students to move through the room in the following ways:

Jogging, leaping, hopping, running, dragging your feet, taking quick steps, taking long strides, walking sideways, walking backwards, rolling on your side, dragging your body using your arms, crab walk, leap frog (but not leaping over others).

Continue to move through the room using the previous suggestions but this time move as though your body is being led by the following body parts:

Nose, elbow, ear, top of head, bottom, stomach, chest, knees, pelvis, left shoulder, right shoulder

4.4 Divide the class into pairs. Each pair is to explore ways of moving through the room while maintaining physical contact with their partner.

Some suggestions are:

Back to back, side by side, rolling, sitting back to back, one slowly dragging the other, holding hands, top of head touching top of head,

4.5 In this activity your students will explore chorus movement work by using intuition, peripheral vision and focus to create synchronicity.

Divide the class into groups of six. Each group forms a tight bunch standing upright. No talking is allowed. The group takes very small steps forward initiated by one of the group's members at the front of the bunch. At any point any group member can change direction by making a right angle turn. All group members must yield to this offer and turn to move forward in that direction. The group travels for a short while until another group member makes a right angle turn which the whole group must respond to and so on. The group needs to keep the frequency of changes in direction and the speed at a manageable level. Once they develop confidence they can speed up the frequency of changes.

The exercise above is repeated but this time, as the group moves through the room, any group member can initiate a movement of the arms or head and the rest of the group must mirror this movement. It is important that the movement is performed slowly so that the group members have time to respond to and mirror the movement.

4.6 Divide the class into groups of five or six. Each group will devise a short physical theatre performance to show to the class. The focus of the piece is to be drawn from *Unspoken*. The students can focus on any theme, issue or moment but must devise original movements to convey their perspective. It is a good idea to remind students that in physical theatre work, as in dance and theatre, the performers need to be emotionally engaged with the piece in order to make it convincing for the audience. The performance must include:

- Music to accompany the movement
- A moment where balancing is used
- The use of chorus work and synchronised movement

Provide the groups with the following guidelines for the performance:

- Brainstorm ideas for the performance.
- Consider what music you will include.
- Use improvisation to practice the physical movements you will include.
- Use notation to record movements, group shapes, spatial arrangements
- Consider using levels and the space in an imaginative way.
- Rehearse your performance
- Present your work to the class.

Activity 5: My Brother, My Sister

Related Subject Areas: Drama

In this activity your students will draw on their relationships with their siblings to create drama performance work. If some students in your class do not have siblings ask them to develop their work drawing on a relationship with another close family member.

5.1 Ask your students to work on their own. Complete a relaxation exercise using stretching and breathing. Once your students are comfortable and focused, ask them to recount significant moments in their relationship with one sibling or significant relative. Once they have had time to recollect moments in their relationship with their sibling, ask them to sit quietly and write a list of statements or words that capture the essence or importance of two significant experiences with their sibling.

5.2 Ask your students to work individually. They are to choose two statements or words from their list. Take your students through a short physical warm up using stretching, spine rolls and centering exercises. Over fifteen counts, ask your students to create a frozen pose that best expresses one of the two selected words. Once they have created a frozen pose for the first word, ask them to create a frozen pose for the second word. Now ask your students to create the first pose again and then using movement over ten counts, transition smoothly from the first pose to the second pose.

5.3 Divide the class into pairs. Each pair is to share their sibling experiences with their partner and to show their work from exercise 5.2. Each pair is to

discuss the representation of sibling relationship by asking each other about the intention of the representation. The following leading question may help your students with this reflection. 'Through my posture and body language I wanted to show.....'

5.4 Each pair is to prepare two short movement pieces to express aspects of each partner's experiences in their relationship with a sibling. Using the words or statements from the relaxation and reflection exercise, ask the pairs to find ways to use levels, body language, gesture, body contact and movement to express the key aspects of their sibling relationships. Ask your students to use voice to express their statements or words orally and in conjunction with the movement. They might consider the use of vocal dynamics; pitch, pace, tone, rhythm, repetition, energy, to help highlight a moment or to underscore a particular feeling.

5.5 View each pair's performance work and comment on the strong features of the performance in terms of use of space, levels, focus of the performers, use of voice, body language and facial expression, clarity of images and so on.

Activity 6: Performing an Extract From *Unspoken*

Related Subject Areas: Drama

In this activity your students will work with an extract from the script of *Unspoken*. The selected extract is from the beginning of the play and details the moment when the teenage Rebecca first hears about her brother's disability. It then moves to a recollection of when Rebecca holds her brother while in the bath and her emotional response to his fragility. The extract ends with Rebecca's reactions to finding out that she is to move with her family to a new home.

The following activities and exercises have been written to help your students develop part or all of the extract to polished performance.

6.1 Ask your students to complete the following to prepare the text for performance:

- Read the extract with your students and identify the given circumstances. Who is involved? Where are they? What is happening?

- Read the extract a second time. Focus on any strong images and action words, underline these (see the extract from the interview with Rebecca Clarke as an example).
- Identify the performer's intention in each section of the extract by asking 'What do I want the audience to feel/ understand/see?'
- Read the extract a third time. Focus on the rhythm of the writing paying close attention to punctuation as this can influence emphasis and the length of pauses.

6.2 Ask your students to find somewhere in the room where they can work independently. Complete a physical warmup with your students.

Read through the following images from the extract one at a time. Ask the students to listen to the words that describe each image and to consider how their body might create a shape that represents the image.

Read through the images again one at a time. As you read an image aloud, ask your students to engage with any emotional response to the image. Ask them to allow the feeling to grow in intensity until they feel they are ready to create a pose that they feel expresses the image. It is best that students respond relatively quickly and spontaneously.

- There are crying women everywhere around me.
- She drip feeds me the words
- His muscles softened out like soap
- He's too strange and tiny
- Throw me in the deep end

6.3 Ask your students to extend the pose to a brief series of movements in response to the images listed above. Ask your students to stand. Either copy the images where students can see them or ask them to repeat the lines after you read them out loud. As the students say each line ask them to explore a series of movements that might express the emotional content of the line. Repeat this until you feel your students are comfortable with their interpretation. Create a performance space. Ask your students to choose one line to perform. Group the students together according to the lines they have chosen. Ask each group to present their individual interpretations at the same time. Provide the students with positive feedback on their interpretations.

6.4 Divide your students into groups of four. Each group is to choose eight lines in sequence. They are to present a performance where each person delivers two of the eight lines. The group can use poses and movement to work together to interpret the content of the lines. Encourage the groups to play with the delivery of the lines. Some suggestions are the use of echo, silence, repetition, pace, emphasis and pitch. Present this work to the class. Allow sufficient time for rehearsal.

6.5 Ask your students to prepare a solo performance of part or all of the extract. Encourage them to use physical movement to enhance the expressionist potential of the text. This activity will require substantial rehearsal and preparation time. Present the work to the class and provide feedback on effective performance skills and directorial decisions.

One day mum wakes me to say
 They're taking Julian to the city
 For some special tests
 When she rings me she sounds so far away
*'Mum? What did ya buy me?
 What's wrong?
 What's wrong with Julian?'*
 My aunt takes the phone from me
 She listens
 She cries
 There are crying women everywhere round
 me
 Then mum speaks
*'He's been having seizures, love
 He's brain damaged.'*
 She drip feeds me the words
 She drip feeds me the words

I'm in the bath when they come home
 Mum stands there holding Julian
'Can he have a swim?'
'... Yeah'
 I grab his squirming body and lower him into
 the like-warm water

The water rises up above his top-lip for a
 heartbeat
 I see his eyes gasp
 My arm slips underneath his ribs
 I pull him quickly in towards me
 His muscles softened out like soap

His face gently contorted
 If I let go his head will thud against the
 bottom,
 he'll dissolve into the dark beneath
 I don't know that I can hold him anymore
 He's too strange and tiny
 It hurts my chest too much to know that I am
 holding all the life of him

But mum watches us
 She just wants his skin clean
 Mum picks him up and tells me
 we're packing up and going'
*'The doctor's here made a mistake luv.
 They said that he had reflex, but really he's
 been having epileptic seizures.
 Seizures that send him backwards.
 So we're going.
 New start.
 We're packing up and going'*
 I've only spent fifteen years digging myself in
 Finding friends, finding family
 Finding some good stuff in this shithole
 This is everything I know
 But sure, if we have to go we have to go
 Pack us up
 Pull us out
 Throw me in the deep end
 I'll swim if I have to
 I'm fine
 It's Julian's world now
 You can all have each other
 If you can't look after me, I'll look after myself
 Just you watch

Activity 7: Storytelling in Pairs

Related Subject Areas: Drama/English

In this activity your students will practice their ability to both tell stories and listen to stories.

7.1 Divide the class into pairs. Each pair is to take turns telling their partner a short personal story. The listening partner is not allowed to interrupt or ask questions.

7.2 Each person now re-tells their partner's story in first person as though the story had happened to them. Once they have completed re-telling their partner's story, the partner reflects on the accuracy of the story and any insights they gained

from hearing their own story told by another person.

7.3 One person from each pair stands and moves to a new partner. The new pair repeats the steps in story telling but in the re-telling of the story they must stand and act out the story for their partner using mime, body language and gesture.

Activity 8: Playback Stories

Related Subject Areas: Drama

Divide the class into small groups. Each person in each group is to tell a story of significance to them. The story may have happened in the past or more recently. Instruct the groups that everyone is to listen without interjecting or asking questions. Once a person has finished a story the others may ask questions or comment to help elaborate the details of the story. Once each person has told their story ask the group to choose one story they would like to perform for the class. The group will need to rehearse their performance. The owner of the story is to play the central character by narrating the events of the story to the audience while acting them out. The others can be other characters, objects or provide sound effects if required.

Activity 9: Transformation

Related Subject Areas: Drama

In this activity the skill of transformation will be explored to help students in Activity 11 where they will perform a self-devised monologue.

9.1 Transforming Objects in a Circle: The class sits in a circle. Pass around an object such as a piece of fabric or rope. Each person transforms the object by reshaping the object and using it in a way that indicates the new object they have transformed it into.

9.2 Transforming Objects in Groups: Divide the students into groups of three. Each group takes one chair and one piece of fabric. Using the people and objects, each group is to create a tableau for two of the following titles:

- Childhood Prank
- Family Holiday
- Sibling Rivalry
- Extended Family

Your teacher will give you ten counts to transform from the first tableau to the next tableau. It is

important that you make and yield to offer from members in your group so that your transition from one tableau to another is achieved without discussion.

9.3 Scene Transitions Using Transformation: Divide the class into pairs. Each pair will work together to help devise moments of transformation. One partner watches and acts as director to help their partner achieve effective moments of transformation. Choose one or more of the following situations to practice transformation in creating scene changes.

- A character enacts a moment from their early childhood and then transforms to being the same character in a different setting ten years later.
- A character enacts a school yard incident and then transforms the scene into a setting where their father is being interviewed by the school principal.
- A character enacts a family dispute and transforms to play all the members involved in the argument to show the different points of view.

Activity 10: Personal Poetry

Related Subject Areas: English

In this activity your students will write poetry that expresses a few of their key experiences in the journey from early childhood to young adulthood. Ask your students to discuss or write down the joys, issues or concerns that they can recall from their own childhood and adolescence. You might like to begin this activity by providing students with examples of poems that explore personal experience. The following websites provide a mixture of classical poems and contemporary self published poems:

Poetry Search: www.netpoets.com

The Poetry Searcher: www.glaced.digitalspace.net

Find Poetry.Com: www.findpoetry.com

Revise with the students some of the poetry devices like alliteration, assonance, rhyme, repetition, metaphor, and simile.

Ask your students to write their poem at home and then bring the drafts to class for refining and editing. The finished poems can be used for performance work in activity 11 or you may wish to publish them for others to read.

Activity 11: Writing a Monologue

Related Subject Areas: English/Drama

In this activity your students will write a short, four minute monologue that will be performed using a variety of dramatic techniques. The content of the monologue will be the re-telling of a significant past experience. Provide your students with the following questions to help them shape their own performance.

- What form or style will my monologue be performed in? Will it be realistic, melodramatic or realistic but with influences from other forms?
- What impact will the use of direct address have on the actor/audience relationship?
- Will the plot be a linear narrative or non-linear narrative structure? What is the best way to tell the story/present the ideas?
- Who is/are the antagonist/s in the monologue?
- How will the tension of the piece be established? How will tension be built? What is the climactic moment of the piece? Will there be other climactic moments? When will they occur?
- What locations will be used? How will the locations be established using mime, gesture and body language and elements of production; set, costume, sound and lighting?
- How will transformation be used to show location, objects and time and place?

Activity 12: Poster Design and Media Release

Related Subject Areas: English, Drama, Visual Arts, Photographic and Digital Media

Ask your students to examine a number of photographic images that have been used for theatre companies to promote their productions. If possible, show your students images from season brochures for companies that use photographic images. Ask the class to identify the following:

- What is the central photographic image of the poster?
- What does this image convey about the play?
- What are the strengths of this choice of image?

- What are the weaknesses?
- How does the placement of the image in relation to text the choice of font, colour of font, point size, background colour and other visual elements impact on the viewer?

Ask your students to create a poster for a production of *Unspoken*. The poster must have a central photographic image. The image can be taken from another acknowledged source or the students may wish to photograph their own image using a digital camera. The poster must also include the title of the performance, dates, venue and contact details for tickets.

Display the student work and complete peer evaluations. Students can use the following criteria as a guideline for evaluation:

Ability of the design to:

- Communicate the plays main ideas/themes/issues
- Attract an audience
- Provide essential information
- Incorporate text and image effectively
- Communicate a particular mood or atmosphere

Your students may also write a three hundred word media release. The media release should include the use of persuasive language to encourage the public to see the performance. The content of the review might include a brief synopsis, the strengths of the performance and the relevance of the performance for a contemporary audience. The media release may be an imagined interview with the writer, a performer or director.

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