Introduction

Non-naturalism is one of those generic, broad terms that is applied to anything that cannot be defined by any other term. However, there are many styles of theatre that sit under this broad term and training students to become confident working in a non-naturalistic style is very important for developing their own ideas and understanding of what drama can be. It is of particular use in devising as it broadens their ability to work within a range of styles.

This scheme of work is designed to be a bit of a pick 'n' mix of different aspects of non-naturalism that could lead to further exploration in their own separate schemes of work.

Learning objectives
By the end of this scheme students will have:

- Explored practically the work of a number of practitioners who work within the non-naturalistic spectrum
- Gained confidence in how to apply a non-naturalistic style to their work.

Lesson 1: Brecht is epic

Learning objectives
By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- Who Brecht was
- How to begin to explore practically the style of Brecht’s theatre
- How to create scenes practically that use key elements of Brecht’s theatre.

Entry task (5 mins)

Have on the board the quote, ‘The audience hang up their brains with their hats in the cloakroom.’

What do students think this means? Take suggestions.

Treasure Hunt (15 mins)

Put up a picture of Brecht. Who do they think he is? Introduce students to his name and then have around the room key pieces of information about Brecht. Students have 5 minutes to work their way around the room finding six facts about Brecht and his work.

Ask students what they have found out about him. What do they expect his theatre to be like? On the brain and crystal ball sheet, can they write a prediction of what they think Brecht’s theatre might be like in practice?

Finding a sense of non-naturalism (20 mins)

This is a quick process to take a short naturalistic conversation and add elements of Brecht’s practice which will create a non-naturalistic style to the scene.

Using the scripted example from the Resources section, students work in pairs throughout this sequence of exercises. Start with pairs rehearsing a naturalistic version of the conversation. Watch examples. Discuss what decisions students had to make for the scene to make sense. Explain that when working with non-naturalism these decisions still need to be made, but we look to apply a certain set of criteria to the way we perform the scene to begin to create a sense of non-naturalism. Work through each of the following giving students time to add them into their scene:

- Direct address: At one point in the script an actor will step out of the action and address an improvised dialogue to the audience, creating a strong interaction with them (touching, eye contact).
- Narration: At one point in the script an actor will step out of the action and deliver improvised narration (as the narrator not their character) of some
extra information. Discuss the difference between this and their experience of previous script work.

**Moving to the next level (20 mins)**
Look at a second piece of script and this time try the following:
- **Stage directions**: Ask students to read the stage directions in the script along with the dialogue their characters say.
- **Swap roles**: Halfway through, indicate to students that you will clap and they must then switch roles live on stage.
- **Object**: Give the students a cardboard box, which they must each use in the scene to represent two differing props. You could give students a stick, umbrella, suitcase or similar which will work in the same way.
- **Non-chronological order**: Play the scene out of order. Again, discuss the effect of this - link to the style of Brecht and relationship with the audience.

**Using your brain (5 mins)**
Go back to the crystal ball and brain sheet. What do students think about Brecht's work? Can they record their thoughts in the brain on the sheet? How do they think Brecht wanted his audience to respond to his work? Can they include a comment on this?

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**Lesson 2: A touch of politics – but not too much**

**Learning objectives**
By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:
- How to draw out a message for a non-naturalistic piece of theatre
- How to develop non-naturalistic features of their work.

**Warm-up (10 mins)**
Play Grandmother's Footsteps. What fairy-tale could we link this with? Then go on to play What's the Time Mr Wolf? – again, to what can we link this? Explain that we are going to focus on the story of The Three Little Pigs.

**Story sort (10 mins)**
Using the resource provided, give groups an envelope with the story of The Three Little Pigs cut up. Students should arrange the story into the correct order and then create it as five frozen images. Groups can perform their tableaux back together so you can check they have the beginnings of the work.

**Give us a sign (10 mins)**
Introduce the idea of placards in performance. Explain that for each scene students are going to write a placard explaining what happens in that scene. Groups can work on sugar paper or A3 paper.

  Look at some examples of students' work and discuss what the effect of the placard is – link to taking away the element of surprise; why might we want to do that? Can they link it to their work from last lesson? Use the reflection sheet in the Resources section for students to capture their responses.

**Playing with structure (15 mins)**
Furthering this idea, explore the structure of the story. Challenge them to tell the story, but in a completely different order. They should still use their placards and be encouraged to move the action backwards and forwards. They might want to repeat scenes more than once.

  Watch examples of work, and again discuss the effect that performing in this way has. Again, ask them to record their reactions on the reflection sheet.

**Moving away from the story (20 mins)**
Show students the Guardian video advert of the Three Little Pigs to begin to open up discussions on ways that you can present the same story.

  What do they think the message of the story is? Follow this by showing them the images. Discuss who could the wolf be? Who could the pigs be? Encourage students to now make them human.

  Going back to their groups, students adapt the frozen images they had and now add their interpretation. It may be that they turn the wolf into an evil landlord who is demanding rent from his three tenants (the Little Pigs). They decide they don’t like the way they are being treated, so get revenge on him. I often give this situation to students who struggle with finding one for themselves.

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**Resources**
- Images of The Three Little Pigs story
- Sugar paper or A3 paper
- Marker pens
- Reflection sheets.

The link to the video is here: [https://www.theguardian.com/media/video/2012/feb/29/open-journalism-three-little-pigs-advert?INTCMP=ILCNETIMG12382I](https://www.theguardian.com/media/video/2012/feb/29/open-journalism-three-little-pigs-advert?INTCMP=ILCNETIMG12382I)
Once students have adapted their images, they should then adjust their placards to reflect the action and character of their piece.

Watch examples of students’ work. What is the message of the piece now? Can you guide them to the idea of the ‘pigs’ winning over the ‘wolf’ and link to political and social ideas of Brecht’s work?

**Finding the message (5 mins)**

Use the plenary sheet from the previous lesson and ask students to fill in the placard space with what overall message they think Brecht was trying to get his audience to think about.

**Lessons 3 and 4: Artaud is a nightmare**

**Learning objectives**

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

▶ An introduction to the work of Artaud and how this links to non-naturalism.

**Entry task (10 mins)**

As students enter, pose the question to them: What is your worst nightmare? They should draw a response onto a Post-it note. In a circle, they now pass their Post-it note round one space and must explain what they think the nightmare is that is now in front of them.

Link this idea of nightmares to Artaud, and explain how he wanted to create theatre that would get an audience to realise their greatest fears and nightmares. Sounds fun!

**Follow the leader – pushing the boundaries (10 mins)**

Have students find a space in the room and get them to follow a physical sequence created by you. It may be as simple as reaching up high, reaching to the floor, stretching out with both hands to the left and then to the right, lying down and standing back up. Keep repeating this until students begin to give up - the younger the students the quicker this will happen. (With certain groups of students it might happen right away!)

What do they think was the point of the exercise? Link to the fact that Artaud wanted to push his actors and audience to the extreme. He believed that the actor needed to use themselves physically beyond their comfort zones.

**Talking through sounds (10 mins)**

Have the group walking around the space. As they come across others they should greet them, not with actual words, but with polite sounds of annoyance.

On a signal, the annoyance turns more intense until it reaches anger and, finally, fury.

Repeat the exercise, with all the physicality, but using the word ‘Hello’. You could split the class in half so that half act as an audience. Could those who were watching still understand what was happening when there were no words? So this shows how we can convey emotion in more abstract ways. Link to Artaud’s belief in a universal language, in which everyone could understand and engage.

**Arguing through sound (10 mins)**

Develop the previous exercise by students working in pairs to create a scene in which two people are having an argument, but there must be no talking; instead the argument must be made through sounds. Watch examples and reflect on whether we understand the scene and are therefore using a universal language.

**Emotion Line (15 mins)**

Model this with the class to begin with. Ask for seven volunteers and give them the emotion of panic. The first person in the line gives a slight response to this word. The next in line watches and builds the response a little further, then the third builds it further, and so on. Keep working up and down the line as long as is necessary. Keep pushing them to take it further and further. Using the same idea, students can then work in their own groups with the words ‘Anger’, ‘Suspicion’ or ‘Love’. Watch examples of work. Can we understand the emotion? Emphasise that in this style of theatre physicality is taken to the extreme, but not ‘over-acted’ or melodramatic.

**Resources**

▶ Post-it notes
▶ Ticking clock sound effect
▶ Images of dogs fighting
▶ Artaud checklist.
Concrete language of symbols (10 mins)
Play students the sound effect of a ticking clock. What emotion do they link with this sound? Boredom? Frustration?
Show them an image of two dogs fighting over the same bone (see Resources). What emotion do they link with this? Anger?
Working in the same groups as the previous task, what image would they create for the word ‘Rejection’? Remind them this is a symbol not a literal image.
Repeat, but using the word ‘Scared’. Look at students’ work and see if they are using previously explored ideas, such as pushing the emotion in the image to the extreme. Have they used any sound with the image to help show the emotion? They may need to go back and develop their image as this is quite a tricky task.

Creating a hellish performance (25 mins)
Going back to their nightmares at the beginning of the lesson, students are now going to bring one of their groups’ nightmares to life through a performance that uses the elements explored in the lesson. Reiterate the expectation that there will be very little spoken words, but rather a series of strong clear images supported where needed with a universal language of sound.
Watch examples of students’ work and use the Artaud checklist for students to reflect on one another’s work.

How does this style of theatre fit into the umbrella of non-naturalism?

Lesson 5: Frantically physical

Learning objectives
By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:
▶ How to use physical theatre to create a piece of drama
▶ An exploration of the difference between literal and non-literal movement.

Entry task: What does it mean?
As students enter, give them an image from a piece of physical theatre. They should annotate the image with what they can see and then come to a conclusion about what they think it means. What is the image trying to show them? Question students on their findings and introduce the idea of physical theatre: is all theatre physical? How does last week’s work fit in?

Warm-up (10 mins)
Begin by playing Stop, Go, Clap, Jump with students to warm them up, and then develop this into Clear the Space.
Both of these games are very simple and instructions to playing them are as follows:

Stop, Go, Clap, Jump
Students walk around the space responding to the following commands:
▶ ‘Go’ – walk around the room
▶ ‘Stop’ – stand still where you are
▶ ‘Clap’ – clap once and continue walking
▶ ‘Jump’ – jump once and continue walking.

Once students are comfortable with these instructions, reverse them, so ‘Stop’ means ‘Go’ and ‘Go’ means ‘Stop’, etc.

Clear the Space
Students walk around the room responding to the following commands:
▶ ‘Clear the space’ - run to the edges of the room and touch one of the walls
▶ ‘Cinema’ – all come together and sit on the floor facing the board like it is a cinema screen
▶ ‘Floor’ – lie on the floor wherever you are in the room
▶ ‘Person’ – find the nearest person and pull them into a hug and hold it
▶ ‘Favourite’ – stop and point to your favourite part of the room
▶ ‘Centre’ – all come together in the centre of the room and put your head on the shoulder of the person next to you.

Creating meaning from movement (20 mins)
Students get into pairs and count 1–3 between themselves. They are then going to replace number 1 with a movement. (Keep it very simple and model for students.) They then replace number 2 and then number 3, which also has a sound effect. Watch sequences and discuss the idea that they are abstract sequences.
Have three different locations: the library, on top of two mountains, the playground. Students must keep their same sequences, but adapt the quality of their movements to fit the location: i.e. very small and quiet if in the library. Watch examples again and discuss what we can see in the way of a story.

**Chair Duets (10 mins)**
Watch the following video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ_9Eaog2yw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ_9Eaog2yw)

What story can students see? Explain that this is a more literal use of physical theatre, which still uses abstract movement, but the relationship between the performers is easier to understand.

The process to create these duets is very straightforward, but relatively wordy. Therefore, the following video can be used to work through the process step-by-step or you can use the overview sheet in the Resources section for students to work in pairs to then create their own chair duets.

Once students have created their duets, watch examples and discuss whether a relationship was clear between the characters. Do they find this easier to interpret than the abstract movement they did previously?

**Lessons 6 and 7: Performance and assessment**

**Learning objectives**
By the end of the lesson students will have:
- Rehearsed and performed a scene or sequence in a non-naturalistic style.

**Activity option A**
Working in a group or a pair, students should revisit one of the following scenes or sequences from the previous lessons:
- Political/Social/The Three Little Pigs
- Artaud Nightmare
- Abstract Movement Sequence
- Chair Duets.

They should work to rehearse and shape their piece ready for assessment.

**Activity option B**
Show the class the following documentary: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYPJc_wStqc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYPJc_wStqc)

It is 8 minutes long, and it may be something you only choose to use with older KS3 students as some may find it unsettling.

Using the documentary along with a newspaper report on the Grenfell tragedy, ask students to create a non-naturalistic response to the material. They may choose to focus on a particular aspect of the story contained in the documentary or on a part of the tragedy in general.

Working with music for this option can be very powerful especially if students choose the physical theatre option so have a selection appropriate to the mood of the piece.

Watch and assess students’ work in line with your school’s assessment criteria and policy.
Bertolt Brecht

Resource 1: Brecht info

Biographical Information.
- 1898-1956.
- German Marxist playwright, poet and director.
- Political writer and director.

Well known facts:
- Spent his life evolving a theory and practice of theatre as a forum for political ideas.
- Brecht aimed to appeal to less privileged classes, treating contemporary issues such as war, stock-markets, poverty, unemployment and corruption in high places.

Terminology related to Brecht;
- 'V' effect
- Alienation
- Bare stages
- Breaking of an illusion
- No fourth Wall
- Minimalism
- Actors played multiple roles
- Direct audience address
- Epic Theatre
- Political
- Didactics
- Gestus
- Narration and song

Theory behind Staging/Acting

Epic Theatre is the term used generally to describe Brecht's theory and technique. His plays were 'epic' in that the dramatic action was episodic - a disconnected montage of scenes, non-representational staging, and the 'alienation effect'. All elements contribute to Brecht's overall purpose which was to comment on the political, social and economic elements that affected the lives of his characters.

Acting Techniques
Brecht believed that an actor should present a character in a way that wasn't an impersonation, rather, a narration of the actions of the character. He did this because he wanted to constantly remind his audience that they were watching a play.

Breaking the Fourth Wall
'The Fourth Wall' is an imaginary wall separating the audience from the action on the stage. In realistic productions this wall remains intact and the performers do not acknowledge that they are being watched. The audience are observers who are conditioned to believe that the world of the play is 'real'. It is a suspension of disbelief. Like most theories of realism, Brecht wanted to disrupt the notion of the fourth wall. "Breaking the fourth wall" involves the characters directly addressing and acknowledging the audience, whether they break character or perform with an awareness of being watched.

Verfremdungseffekt/ Alienation Technique.
It is a technique which 'estranges' the audience and forces them to question the social realities of the situations being presented in the play. Brecht achieved this by breaking the illusion created by conventional plays of the time. He believed that the 'suspension of disbelief' created by realistic drama was a shallow spectacle, with manipulative plots and heightened emotion.

Gestus is a theatrical technique that helps define the emotion within a character and the context they are in. It is the combination of a gesture and a social meaning into one movement, stance or vocal display.

Narration and Song
The purpose of song in his plays is not to heighten the emotion of the scenes, but as a means to commentate or narrate what is going on.
Resource 2: Brecht questions

1. What Year was Brecht born? ........................................................................................................................................................................

2. What is the term used to describe Brecht's theory and technique? ........................................................................................................................................................................

3. In performance what do you 'break' when you address an audience directly? ........................................................................................................................................................................

4. Describe what Gestus is. ........................................................................................................................................................................

5. Name five common elements (using the correct terminology) of Brechtian theatre ........................................................................................................................................................................

6. What did Brecht want to constantly remind the audience? ........................................................................................................................................................................

7. What are the two things that Brecht used to comment/narrate to the audience? ........................................................................................................................................................................

The most famous Gestus of all – Mother Courage's The Silent Scream by Helene Wiegel.
Resource 4: Script examples

A: You took my pencil case.
B: I didn't.
A: I can't believe it's lost.
B: I wish I could help.

Resource 5: Script examples

ADAM walks slowly to centre stage. He is looking nervous.
CLARA enters after a moment, walking directly up to ADAM with a huge smile.

CLARA: Oh hello! You must be Adam!
ADAM: Um...yes hi.
CLARA: I'm Clara, lovely to meet you.
ADAM: Yeah.
CLARA: I love a haunted house don't you?
ADAM: Yeah.
Resource 6: Three Little Pigs picture sequence
## Artaud checklist

Use the following list to evaluate the work of other groups in your class. Tick each one you see in their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artaud Performance Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The audience sit in the middle of the performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound is used loudly to show emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement and gesture used instead of words</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Resource 9: Physical Theatre images