

Terror Kid by Benjamin Zephaniah

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KS4

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Introduction

This scheme of work uses the issues raised in Benjamin Zephaniah's novel to inspire students' own ideas for devised work. The story focuses on a teenage boy who is unwittingly involved in a terror plot and examines the themes of responsibility and accountability, as well as exploring how the media can use small pieces of information to create a story that is quite different from the truth. The work in this scheme uses different elements of the story, incorporating a range of techniques that will allow students to move on to devising their own stories, create their own characters or explore the themes and issues raised.

As a teacher you will need some knowledge of the text but students will not need to have read it; a plot summary will be sufficient. Each session is based on an hour-long lesson, but the scheme is flexible and sessions can run into each other or be paused to continue next time.

Learning objectives

- ▶ To use ideas from your research and a discussion about rioting to create tableaux exploring the images evoked
- ▶ To bring tableaux to life to further explore your ideas
- ▶ To create placards and create a character taking part in a demonstration
- ▶ To recreate the scene of Rico's first arrest using hot seating to explore the characters' feelings
- ▶ To devise a short scene that shows Rico and Karima's relationship
- ▶ To devise a short scene exploring how Karima's friends react to Rico and demonstrating the strength of their friendship
- ▶ To improvise the first meeting between Speech and Rico, exploring what students might do in the same situation
- ▶ To create an ensemble performance exploring what advice the people around Rico would give him about Speech
- ▶ To create an ensemble performance using monologues to explore some of the characters affected by the bombing
- ▶ To use discussion ideas to devise a monologue from the point of view of one of the novel's characters, reflecting on what has happened.

Introductory research task

Ask students to research riots, specifically the 2011 London riots, to inform their discussion work in Session 1.

Session 1: Riots

Learning objectives

- ▶ To use ideas from your research and a discussion about rioting to create tableaux exploring the images evoked
- ▶ To bring tableaux to life to further explore your ideas.

Discussion: Riots don't just happen; there is usually a sequence of events that build up to a riot. These sorts of events often start with some form of protest. What types of things are people protesting about? In the novel the protests are about a young woman being shot by police. When people are demonstrating about this, a police officer pushes a teenage girl to the ground and kicks her. A video of the incident is uploaded to the internet sparking anger, which leads to demonstrations turning into riots.

'The British people, mainly young people of all races, all faiths, and many with no faith, were rioting up and down the country. They had had enough.' How do you think the protest escalated into a riot followed by looting? Discuss the idea of looting and

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Text used: *Terror Kid* by Benjamin Zephaniah, published by Hit Key Books, ISBN: 978-1-471-40177-0.



the justifications people try to give for stealing and damaging property. What imagery is evoked when you think of riots?

Warm-up: Circle of actions

Ask students to stand in a circle facing clockwise around the circle. Ask someone to begin by performing a noise and a simple action, e.g. jumping and saying 'Boing'. The movement does not have to mean anything. The person directly in front of the person who started looks over their right shoulder, observes the action and tries to copy the action as quickly and accurately as possible. This continues round the circle. It is important that students watch the person directly before them rather than someone six places behind them and they should not deliberately change anything. If the noise and action changes as it travels round the circle then they should copy the changes. This may include laughter/sneezing/coughing.

A simpler version involves clapping once and trying to get this to travel round the circle as quickly as possible. It is often a good idea to begin with this as a warm-up.

Main activity 1: Recreating riot imagery

In large groups of around 8. Using the ideas that students researched, ask them to create five tableaux that depict a group protesting, demonstrating and rioting. They should aim for the images to show the progress from a group wanting to take action to a more violent image. Remind students that because the images are frozen they need to express their character's feelings through facial expressions, physicality and proxemics.

For performance ask students to start at the back of the performance space and as they transition between images move towards the audience so that the final image is extremely close to the audience.

Rehearse and perform. For performance, ask the audience to stand as if they are a line of police officers keeping the crowd back.

Feedback

After each performance ask students to offer feedback on the work that they have seen. It is prudent to encourage constructive feedback, both positive and negative, and the use of Drama-specific language. For example, 'I could tell that K's character was angry from her use of facial expressions such as narrowed eyes and pursed lips', or, 'J could have shown his fear by turning his body away from the action and hunching his shoulders.'

Main activity 2: Animating the riot imagery

In the same groups, ask students to recreate the images bringing each one to life for ten seconds before freezing again. The ten seconds will show a snapshot of the action so they should think carefully about what they want to show. As the tableaux are now being brought to life, students should also carefully consider their use of movement and vocal skills.

Rehearse, perform and feedback.

Session 2: Peaceful protest

Learning objectives

- ▶ To create placards and create a character taking part in a demonstration
- ▶ To recreate the scene of Rico's first arrest using hot seating to explore the characters' feelings.

Warm-up: The shouting game

Place two seats in the centre of the room facing each other. Ask two volunteers to sit on the seats. After you have said '3, 2, 1, GO' the students start shouting at each other. However, they are not allowed to swear, pause, touch the other person, leave their seat or say anything personal about the other person. If they break any of these rules they are out and are replaced. Give each pair 30 seconds. You could offer starting ideas to begin the argument.

Main activity 1: Demonstration placards

Discussion: What would make you want to protest? Ask each person to contribute an idea; examples might be cuts in education, building houses on local parkland, fracking, university fees, climate change, universal credit, etc., or something relevant to your school. Does everyone have the right to protest peacefully about something that they disagree with?



Deciding on a protest

Give each student an A3 piece of card and ask them to create a placard with an appropriate slogan, e.g. 'Say no to fracking!' Next, ask students to consider what they would shout if they were on a protest march, e.g. 'No to houses on Bishop's Green!'. It may not be the same as what they have on their placard. Each student should write three phrases on the back of their placard. Using the information in Chapter 5 relating to the things that Rico feels strongly about would be useful here.

Creating a character

Ask each student to consider who is protesting against the issue. It may well be a character similar to themselves, but a character must be created.

Things to consider:

- ▶ Name, age, occupation/education, why is this issue important to you?
- ▶ Posture – How will your character stand?
- ▶ Movement – How will your character move around the space?
- ▶ Facial expressions – How will you express your feelings through your expressions?
- ▶ Vocal skills – How will you use pitch, pace, tone, volume, emphasis?

Performance

Create a whole class ensemble performance by asking students to stand quite closely together, holding their placards. They should imagine that they are the front line, with a row of police stopping them from advancing further. When you say 'Go' they should shout their phrases, repeating them as many times as necessary until you stop them.

Repeat the performance but this time ask students to change the intensity of their shouts from 1 to 10 with 1 being peaceful protest and 10 being furious bordering on violent. Call the numbers when you want students to change and move from 1 to 10 and back down to 1.

Feedback

Film the performances and play them back to facilitate feedback. A further idea to explore is the idea of a silent protest and how this might be effective.

This is an ideal opportunity to discuss Brechtian theatre.

Main activity 2: Arrested

Read the following extract from p. 5 to the class:

Rico carried on walking up Dudley Road and before long he had left the rioting behind and reached the road where he lived. As he turned the corner a police van screeched to a stop. Four officers jumped out of the van and ran up to him, but Rico wasn't worried, he was calm and ready to explain that he had nothing to do with the riots. But there was no time for that; he was taken straight to the ground before he could say a word.

'Where's the stuff you took?' asked one officer.

'I didn't take any stuff.' Rico's face was being pushed into the ground, his lips pressed against the pavement, making it difficult to speak.

'You're under arrest for theft!' yelled the officer.

'But I haven't taken anything!' shouted Rico as he was picked up and thrown into the cage at the back of the van. The van door was slammed shut. Rico was alone, and there was silence.

Discussion: Is this fair treatment of Rico? Do we understand the police's perspective in this situation?

In groups of five recreate the scene up to Rico saying 'But I haven't taken anything!'

Rehearse and perform.

Main activity 3: Hot seating

Ask one of the groups to sit on five chairs in front of the class in their roles as Rico and the police officers. Ask the class to question each person about what happened, their role in the events and how they feel about what has happened. Whoever is answering the questions must answer in character.

Repeat with other groups.

Discussion: How did the actors playing Rico feel about what had happened? What Drama skills were effectively used to express this? How did the police officers feel? Were there any contradictory feelings? How did the actors use Drama skills to portray their characters and their feelings?

Session 3: Rico and Karima

Learning objectives

- ▶ To devise a short scene that shows Rico and Karima's relationship
- ▶ To devise a short scene exploring how Karima's friends react to Rico and demonstrating the strength of their friendship.

Warm-up: Party Quirks

Ask for a volunteer to be the host of a party. Three (or more) others are guests at the party and the host needs to identify what is special about each of the guests. Examples might include: they squeal every time someone says their name; their shoes are full of jelly; a fear of sausage rolls; etc.

The guests must remember to stay in character at all times and must be careful not to be too obvious about their quirk as part of the fun is watching their character develop. Once a guest has been guessed, they leave the party and the game continues until all guests have been correctly identified.

Main activity 1: Rico and Karima's friendship

Discussion: Using the information below discuss what we know about Rico and Karima and their friendship.

	Rico	Karima
Page 3	Karima is Rico's only real friend He is not loud, cool or streetwise He's not a fighter Not interested in talking to people online Into computers and computer hardware and programming Has his own computer repair business Loves playing computer games and likes to modify codes and change graphics	Tough, fiery daughter of Somalian refugees Charismatic Has many friends Into kickboxing and grappling Loud, cool, streetwise Addicted to social media Loves playing computer games and loves the thrill of winning
Page 4	Refuses to steal from shops even when it's easy	Likes the idea of looting the shops
Page 3 'They were an odd couple.'		



Researching the context of Somalian and Romany people would be very informative for this session.

In pairs, devise a one-minute scene that shows the rapport between Rico and Karima. The scene should be set at either of their houses, although in the book Karima always comes to Rico's house. Ask students to show what we know about the characters and their relationship while playing a computer game. Students should imagine the TV screen is where the audience are seated and should pay close attention to their use of mime when using controllers to play the game. (You could provide controllers as props.)

Things to consider:

- ▶ Movement
- ▶ Physicality
- ▶ Facial expressions
- ▶ Vocal skills
- ▶ Proxemics.

Rehearse, perform. During feedback ask students to focus specifically on how performers used the above elements in their work.

Main activity 2: Rico and Karima's friendship (continued)

Discussion: Rico and Karima clearly have a close bond; what do think Karima's friends think about Rico? What sort of status do you think Karima has within her group of peers? Why?

In groups of 6, devise a scene where Rico encounters Karima's friends before Karima has arrived to meet them. The performance should show the group reacting negatively to Rico, perhaps using his lack of involvement in the looting as the basis for their animosity. Ask one of the group to play the role of Karima arriving and reacting to the situation.

Rehearse and perform.

Feedback

How did the actors show Karima's loyalty to Rico? What Drama skills were used effectively?

Session 4: Speech

Learning objectives

- ▶ To improvise the first meeting between Speech and Rico exploring what you might do in the same situation
- ▶ To create an ensemble performance exploring what advice the people around Rico would give him about Speech.

Warm-up: Memory Test

Ask students to sit in a circle. The first person begins by saying their name and something that they like. The person to their left says their own name and something they like beginning with the same letter as their name and then introduces the person to their right and repeats what they have said. As the game progresses round the circle, each person has to introduce one more person and remember what they like, e.g.:

1. I'm Tom and I like tomatoes.
2. I'm Lucy and I like lemons, this is Tom and he likes tomatoes.
3. I'm Sam and I like sausages, this is Lucy and she likes lemons, this is Tom and he likes tomatoes.

The game continues until it returns back to the first person, in this case Tom, who has to remember the whole class. If you have a large group you might opt to split them in half.

Main activity 1: Meeting Speech

In pairs ask students to improvise a scene based on Rico and Speech's first meeting using only the following information:

- ▶ You are taking part in a student demo.
- ▶ A clean shaven, smartly-dressed man in his late thirties starts to talk to you. He smiles.
- ▶ He knows your name and introduces himself as Speech.
- ▶ He wants you to go with him to talk. You refuse.
- ▶ He asks you again and says he has some work for you. You tell him to come to the shop on Saturday.
- ▶ He asks you again to hear him out about the job.

If students refuse to go with Speech they should end their work here.

If they decide to go with him, give them the following information:

- ▶ You walk with him to the subway where he asks if you can build a website for him.
- ▶ You tell him it will cost £1400. He says he'll give you £2000 and that it's for Ana who works in your shop. He wants you to build a site for her dressmaking business as a birthday surprise.
- ▶ He gives you all of the money in cash and tells you that he doesn't have a phone and will find you when he needs to.

Perform some of the improvisations. To extend this work you might ask students to rehearse the piece and perform again.

Read Chapter 6 to students to compare their work with the story.

Discussion: How did the actors playing Rico react to Speech? Did anyone follow him or agree to his requests? Did anyone immediately move away from him and refuse to enter into the interaction? What would you do in this situation? Shouldn't alarm bells have been ringing? Why was Rico taken in by Speech?

Main activity 2: What would other characters say?

In groups of five, one person should take on the role of Rico with three others playing the parts of Rico's mum or dad; Karima; Timothy Telford the owner of the shop where Rico works; and one person who plays themselves.

Create an ensemble piece where Rico speaks to each character about the situation with Speech and asks for their advice on what he should do. Initially students should rehearse the piece with Rico talking to one character at a time, giving all the information about Speech while the others remain frozen. This can then be rehearsed for performance.

To take this work further students can rehearse Rico giving smaller sections of information to each character in turn. E.g. Rico tells them that he was approached by a stranger at the demo. Each character responds to this. Next, Rico tells each character that the stranger knows a lot about him; again each character responds, and so on. Rico need only speak once in each section rather than repeating the information three times.



A further extension is for characters not to freeze in between but to create their own scene within the ensemble.

Rehearsal

Once the scene has been developed students should consider how they have created their character using movement, facial expressions, posture, gesture, vocal skills and proxemics as well as how they have chosen to stage their piece.

Perform and feedback.

Session 5: The attack

Learning objectives

- ▶ To create an ensemble performance using monologue to explore some of the characters affected by the bombing
- ▶ To use discussion ideas to devise a monologue from the point of view of one of the novel's characters, reflecting on what has happened.

Warm-up: One Minute Please

Ask for a volunteer to begin and ask them to stand facing the class. S/he is given a topic from the audience, e.g. pumpkins, cheese, spiders, etc., and must talk on that subject for one minute without pausing, repeating phrases, or saying 'um' or 'er'. If they break any of the rules before the minute is up, they are out and someone else takes the chair and a new topic is given.

Main activity 1: Recreating the attack

Give students all the information they need from the book about the bombing of the police station.

In groups of four. Create an ensemble piece showing Rico's part in the attack and the accounts of three characters involved. These could be a civilian eye witness, someone walking past the station who helped the injured, the wife of PC Holland, a police officer who was caught in the blast but survived, paramedics called to the scene, etc.

Create the piece with Rico DSC tapping on his computer keyboard using the following lines and reacting to what he genuinely believes is a bit of mischief:

*Peace sign. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Site goes down. Internal network gets hit.
Big sunflower. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. You're under arrest. Ping. Laughing policeman.*

Position the other characters in the performance space around Rico. Each character should perform a monologue detailing what happened during the attack from their point of view. The monologues could be performed one by one, they might overlap or students could choose to stop and start each character at certain points, e.g. each character talks about what they were doing in or near the station that day, next they talk about what happened just before the blast, then during and finally afterwards.

Rico could repeat his lines throughout the other characters' monologues or he might react to what the characters are saying, moving unseen between them and showing his disbelief at what he has been a part of.

Rehearse, perform and feedback.

Discussion: How do we feel about what happens to Rico? List what he did wrong and compare it to what he was accused of doing. How much responsibility should be given to Rico for his actions? What words would you use to describe Rico? What words would you use to describe the Rico portrayed by the media? What questions do the events of the novel raise about the role of the media?

Extension

Ask students to choose individually a character from the story; they can be a character that plays a big role, e.g. Rico, or a minor role, e.g. Michelle Holland whose dad is killed in the bombing. Ask students to create a monologue from the character's point of view either at the end of the story or perhaps quite a long time afterwards. Allow students to assume that any character would be fully aware of Rico's involvement and that he was only responsible for the hacking and not for the bombing.

