

GCSE DRAMA: BRINGING TEXTS TO LIFE

'DNA' by Dennis Kelly

TASK 1: Read the whole script AND the whole of the 'DNA' student booklet.

In your own time - Go onto YouTube and find / watch a version of the play and /or Google search the play and find images of past productions, (some are probably a lot better than others, but visualising different versions of the play may help with the tasks ahead, especially with design ideas.)

TASK 2: Create flashcards with a detailed description about each character AND 2 key quotes (from different scenes where possible) per character:

JOHN TATE, JAN, MARK, PHIL, LOU, BRIAN

DANNY, CATHY, LEAH, RICHARD, ADAM,

TASK 3: Create a storyboard for the whole play: 'DNA.'

Your storyboard **MUST** show the key points of the play and include the settings for each scene.

Use the following structure:

Prologue, Conflict, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Denouement.

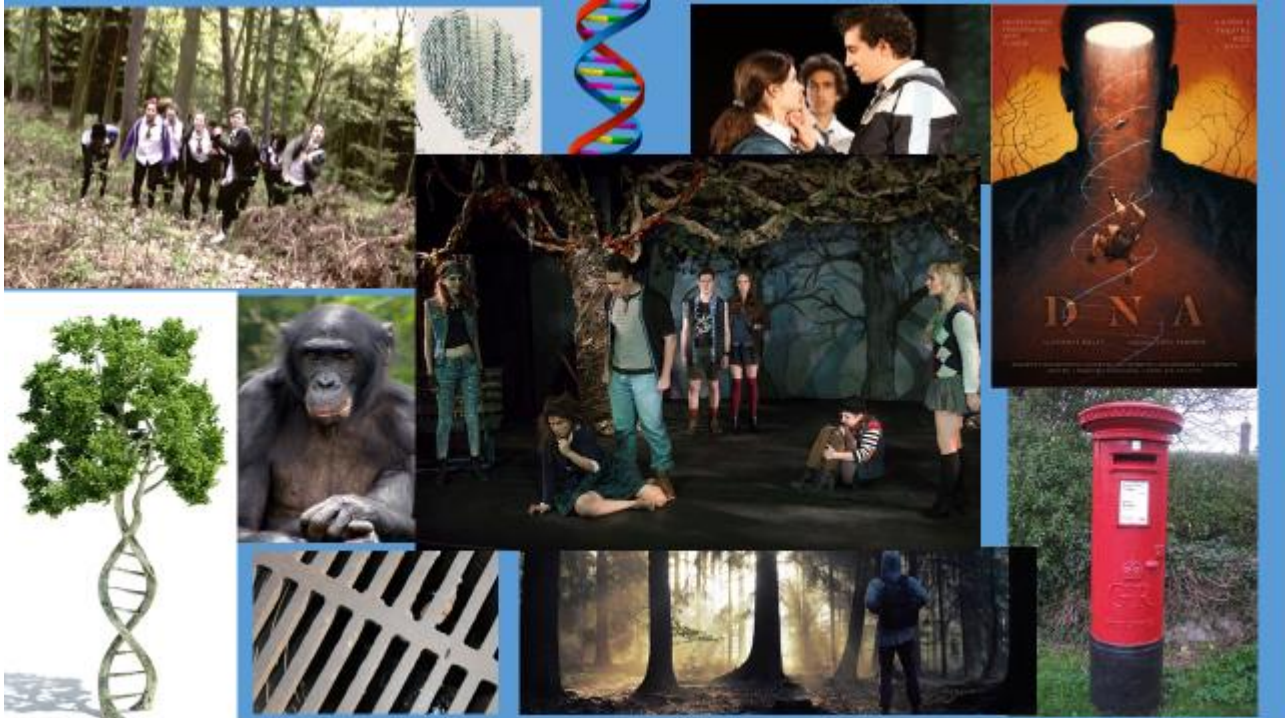
TASK 4: Research the context (background information) of 'DNA.'

Create a fact sheet that contains the following information. (You may include pictures, quotes and diagrams if you wish. You can do this task by hand or digitally in any format you wish.)

Include:

- a. At least five facts about when 'DNA' was first written / performed.
- b. The setting of the play in previous productions, (including any information about the costumes, light, sound etc.)
- c. Any other facts or research that you think is important or interesting, including any connections between the play and anything in the news at the time it was written.

TASK 5: On an A4/A3 plain piece of paper, create your own mood board for your interpretation of 'DNA' based on any theme (s) you have chosen. (A mood board is a collection of images, colours, text, shapes or any other visual ideas that help a director create their concept for a play.) E.g....



TASK 6: Write at least a paragraph explaining your choice of colours, images and text. Think about what they mean to you, how they link to your theme and how the use of some of them might affect / have impact on an audience. (Include this as part of your mood board, if you like!)

TASK 7: Use your Knowledge Organisers to create flash cards to help future revision of 'DNA' by Dennis Kelly and Design Terminology.

TASK 8: As a performer, give 5 suggestions to how you would use voice to create impact on the audience in the portrayal of one character in the play at a key moment.

Tip: Pick a quote, write it down and pick apart exactly how you would speak this line if you were playing this role. Use key words from your Knowledge Organiser to help you.

TASK 9: As a performer, give 5 ways that you would use physicality to create impact on the audience in the portrayal of one character in the play at a key moment.

Tip: Pick a quote, write it down and pick apart exactly how you would use your body language, gestures, gait, facial expressions etc if you were playing this role. Use key words from your Knowledge Organiser to help you.

TASK 10: Write and / or draw a labelled diagram that shows your ideas for the SET DESIGN for 'DNA.'

Tip: Explain / draw how you are going to show the 3 different locations where the play is set, consider where your audience is, think about colours and symbolism, what is on stage and why? Consider set changes (as some of the scenes are very short!) Use the Design Knowledge Organiser to help you!

TASK 11: Make a shoe box set to show your ideas to the rest of the class when we get back to school. Prize for best one(s)!

TASK 12: Discuss how you would use LIGHTING to help to bring the play to life for your audience in a performance on the stage.

What kind of lighting effects do you want on stage and why? Colours? Gobos? UV? Spotlights? Washes? Etc Use the Design Knowledge Organiser to help you!

TASK 13: List the SOUND EFFECTS you would include throughout the play.

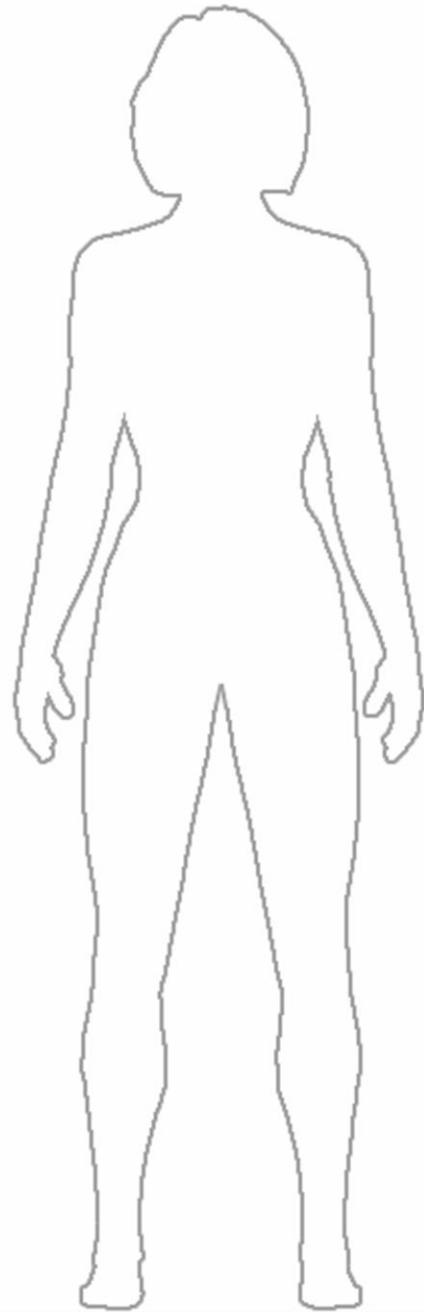
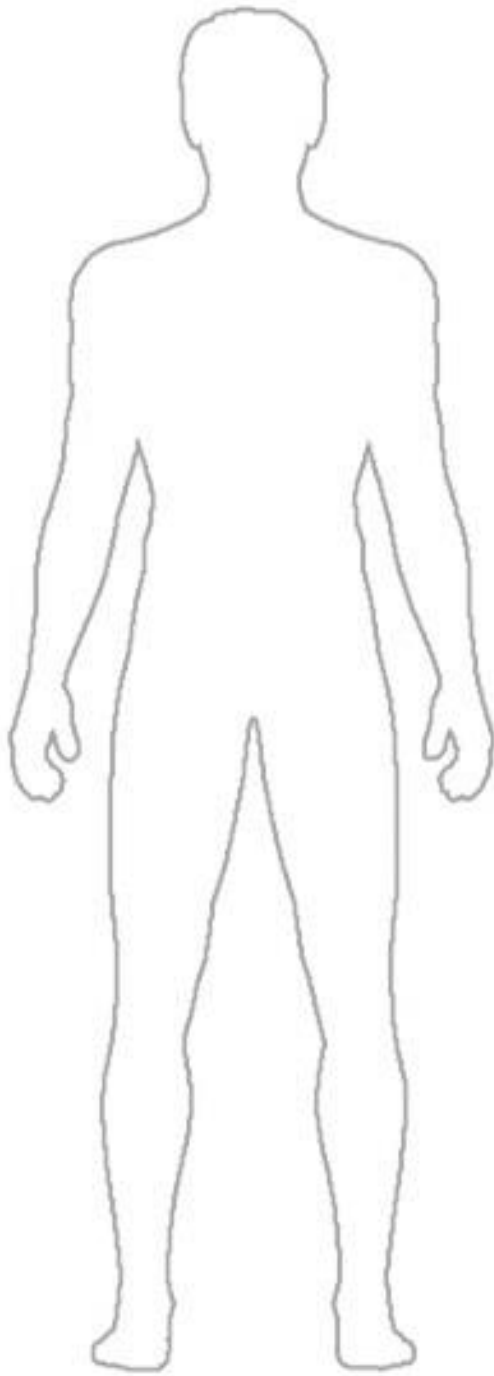
Consider sound linked to the different settings - field, street, wood. Also, seasonal and weather related sound effects.

TASK 14: Discuss how you would use PROPS/STAGE FURNITURE to help to bring the play to life for your audience in a performance on the stage.

What items do you definitely need and what do you want placed on the stage, where and why?

TASK 15: Discuss how you would use COSTUME to help to bring the play to life in a performance on the stage. Draw designs for ALL the main characters - use / trace the templates to help you with the outline, if you want.

What do you want the characters to wear and why? Which colours for which characters? Label your diagrams with as much detail as possible. Use the Design Knowledge Organiser to help you!



TASK 16: Write a (2-3 minute) monologue given by your favourite character, expressing their thoughts on the situation they find themselves in at any point in the play, you could express their feelings or question their decisions. Think about where these characters are mentally and emotionally. You might want to include stage directions, use lines from the script or write a scene / conversation not seen in the play, (which happens before or after.)

TASK 17: Learn and rehearse your monologue: think about your use of movement, physical and vocal skills and eye-contact with the audience. (If you are struggling with this task, please choose a monologue (2-3 minute) from 'DNA' to learn.)

Either perform this monologue to a family member or record yourself performing. Pre-warn them about any bad language included as part of your performance. (You will be asked to perform this monologue at some point in Year 10 - so be prepared!)

TASK 18: Final performance (if you can, without making too much mess or using up valuable materials/ equipment):

Create a short film of a performance of a scene/ scenes from the play.

Represent the characters with 'puppets' - spoons, socks, pegs, pencils, plasticine / play doh, gingerbread people, Lego, toys, dolls, even fruit or veg! Drawings (cartoons / animations etc).

You can be as elaborate as you like in creating the set/ background, for your performance. (You could use your shoe box set if you like!)

- Spend time making final preparations and have a dress rehearsal of your play.
- Record your performance (if you can, if not take a photo / series of photos).

TASK 19: Answer the exam question below (approx 4 mins):

You are involved in staging a production of this play. Please read the extract on pages 49-51 up to LEAH'S line "Okay. Right. Okay."

- You are going to play Brian. Explain TWO ways you would use vocal skills to play this character in this extract (4)

TASK 20: Answer the exam question below (approx 8 mins):

(Same extract as above)

- You are going to play Cathy. As a performer, give THREE suggestions of how you would use performance skills in this extract to bring this character to life (6)

‘DNA’ by Dennis Kelly Knowledge Organiser

CHARACTERS			CONTEXT		PERFORMANCE SKILLS		
PHIL	Menacing, Cold, Sinister		Original performance		Vocal		
JOHN TATE	Controlling, Manipulative, Tyrannical		When?	16 th February 2008	Pitch	How high or low the voice is.	
LEAH	Insecure, Loyal, Insightful		Where?	Cottesloe Theatre, National Theatre, London	Pace	The rhythm and speed with which words are spoken.	
MARK	Cruel, Malicious, Ruthless				Projection	(or volume) How loud or quiet the voice is.	
JAN	Bullying, Intimidating, Gullible		Why?	Intended for schools and youth groups.	Pause	Stopping to emphasise a point or provide contrast and variation.	
RICHARD	Insecure, Confident, Sycophant (flatterer)		Director	Paul Miller	Intonation	The rise and fall of the voice to provide variation and interest.	
CATHY	Volatile, Sadistic, Merciless		Designer	Simon Daw (Set, Costume and Video)			
BRIAN	Nervous, Introverted, Vulnerable		Designer	Paule Constable (Lighting)	Tone	How lines are said to convey meaning.	
LOU	Unsuspecting, Impressionable, Spineless		Stage	‘End on,’ bare stage with back projection	Accent	Used to indicate where are character is from (location) or to show social class or status.	
DANNY	Ambitious, Fearful, Sceptical		Lights	Blue gels	Inflection	The ups and downs of spoken language.	
ADAM	Victim, Confused, Scared		Sound	Drum & bass for transitions, distant aeroplane when Leah leaves Phil, sea gulls after Richard’s monologue.	Emphasis (or stress)	Used to place importance on specifically chosen words.	
Staging		Costume			Uniform (in different states) grey, blue, white	Nuance	Subtle changes in voice to change meaning in a text.
Proxemics	Where a performer stands in relation to other performers & any objects.						
Levels	Levels can be used to show status, power, perspective and variation.						
Sight lines	Ensures the action is visible to the audience from all angles.						
Entrances / Exits	It is important for the audience to understand where the actors have come from and where they are going. This can help put each scene into context.						
Movement	Stillness, pace, direction, size, flow, weight, control, orientation of performers.						
PLOT			Themes		Physical		
Act 1	Street Field Wood	Tension and mystery build as Mark tells Jan that someone is dead. Leah, talking to Phil, admits she is scared. The group meet, led by JT. Mark and Jan outline how they were bullying Adam, until they forced him to walk over a grille and, while having stones thrown at him, fell in. The group assume Adam has been killed. Phil concocts an elaborate plan involving a fictional postman to cover up what they have done. Later, Leah compares humans to bonobos.	Gangs / Belonging	The whole group belong to a gang – with different pairings, relationships and friendships. Some gang members leave. Gang leaders change and try to solve the issue of Adam to protect the gang. There is a sense of loyalty and cruelty. The gang are nihilistic – they have rejected all religious and moral principles.	Gesture	Used to show how a character feels or expresses their thoughts.	
					Facial Expression	Shows a character’s response to a situation or reveals their inner feelings & thoughts.	
					Body language	The way a performer communicates non-verbally.	
Act 2	Street Field Wood	The group find out the police have arrested a postman matching the description of the fictional ‘fat postman with bad teeth.’ This is because Cathy, in an attempt to make the suspect as realistic as possible, found a postman who matched Phil’s description, and contrived to have him pick up Adam’s jumper when she dropped it. The plan has gone wrong and an innocent man has been framed. Brian has been asked to go to the police station to identify the man, but he is scared, so Phil threatens him to make him go.	Power/ Status/ Hierarchy	The power continually shifts within the group. There appears to be a clear hierarchical structure within the characters.	Posture (or stance)	How a character stands. Could show their age, status or emotional state.	
			Bullying/ Cruelty	Psychological and physical abuse of Adam. Phil’s lack of communication towards Leah is emotional cruelty. John Tate is aggressive and threatening. Other characters are bystanders in the bullying – they allow the events to happen.	Gait	How the character walks.	
					Proxemics	How the performer uses stage space. Could show relationships or status.	
Act 3	Street Field Wood	Cathy has discovered Adam alive and living in the woods. He has clearly been affected by what has happened to him. In a shocking twist, and to save themselves from having to reveal the truth of the gang’s plotting, Phil takes charge and demonstrates to Cathy how to kill Adam with a plastic bag.	Identity	How many of the group members are really being themselves? Which group members are putting on an act to impress others? Which group members follow or copy others? Dennis Kelly states that the characters can be played by males or females – either gender is capable of carrying out the actions within the play.	Focus (eye contact)	Where a character is looking.	
					Levels	The height of a character/actor.	
Act 4	Street Field	Jan and Mark and then Richard and Phil in brief conversations about what has happened to the others.			Movement	How a character moves.	

Drama Design Knowledge Organiser

LIGHTING Considerations: Mood/ Atmosphere, Location, Time, Symbolism, Colour, Effect, Angle, Position		SET Considerations: Space, Materials, Colours, Location, Levels, Symbolism, Time, Entrances/exits		COSTUME Considerations: Age, Status, Personality, Economic Climate, Symbolism, Practical		
Lantern Type and specials		Style	Set design is hugely influenced by the style of the play (naturalistic/ realistic, expressionist, symbolic etc).	Style	Concept of play and overall appearance.	
PAR can	Lights a large area (with an edge). Can produce intense colours.	Period	The time on history when the play is set.	Period	Time the play is set.	
Profile Spot	Gives a hard-edged spot of light. Highlights a performer or area.	Colour	Reinforces mood, atmosphere, communicates meaning.	Naturalistic	Accurate to the period.	
Fresnel	Gives a soft-edged spotlight which enables the lighting of precise areas. Easy to blend.	Texture	Support key themes and ideas (a metallic texture will have a different meaning from earthy textures).	Symbolic	Item / colour signals to the audience.	
Barn Door	Four hinged flaps that are fitted in front of a lantern. Can be positioned to block light from reaching certain areas of the stage.	Backdrop	A painted cloth hung at the back of a theatre stage as part of the scenery.	Texture	The feel of the fabric.	
Floodlight	Provides lots of light to a wide area (no edge).	Projection	Used to create a set, or show film or images. Can have a distancing or dreamlike effect.	Representational	Single item that indicates a particular character.	
Moving heads	Automated lights that offer flexibility and variation.	Entrances/ Exits	Position of entrances / exits, and how characters use them, can be significant.	Breakdown	Make a costume appear shabby or dirty.	
Gels	Coloured plastic placed in front of the lantern to alter the colour.	Cyclorama	Curved, stretched cloth around the back of the stage which gives the impression of sky or extensive space.	Material	Cotton, wool, velvet, leather, metal, lace.	
Birdie	A miniature light that is useful for hiding in parts of set.	Levels	Levels give a stage more visual interest, allowing different characters to communicate different status.	Colour meanings	Red	<i>Passion, desire, love, war, danger</i>
Gobo	A small metal disc with a pattern or shape cut into it to create a specific shape (when slotted into a Profile Spot lantern).				Yellow	<i>Joy, happiness, cowardice, caution</i>
UV	Ultra violet light causes specially treated materials to look fluorescent on an otherwise blackened stage.				Green	<i>Growth, harmony, fertility, jealousy</i>
LED	LED stage lights use light-emitting diodes (LEDs) as a light source. LED instruments are an alternative to traditional stage lighting.				Blue	<i>Depth, trust, truth, depression</i>
					Black	<i>Power, elegance, formality, mystery, death, evil</i>
					Purple	<i>Power, wisdom, luxury, arrogance</i>
					White	<i>Purity, peace, cold, clinical.</i>
Lighting Angles (position / direction)		SOUND Considerations: Mood/ Atmosphere, Location, Time, Symbolism, Volume, Tone, Sound effects		TYPES OF STAGING		
Backlight	The actors are lit from behind. Can be used to create shadows / silhouettes or obscure the audience's view.	Live Music / Sound	Live music / sound is where the performers or musicians generate the music /sound on stage.	Proscenium Arch	Most common type of staging in Western Theatre - the audience sits on one side only, also known as end-on staging.	
Up-light	Lighting is angled upwards to create tension or suspense.	Recorded Sound	Sounds that have been pre-recorded and are then played through speakers/a PA system.	In The Round	Positioned at the centre of the audience, who sit around the whole stage. Creates an intimate atmosphere, is good for audience involvement.	
Down Light	Where the performers are lit from the front.	Pitch	This relates to whether a sound is high or low.	End-on-stage	Found in a studio theatre. Seats face the stage space at one end. No proscenium arch.	
Side light	Lit from the side. Can indicate another location or give a feeling of mystery.	Volume	This relates to whether a sound is loud or quiet.	Thrust	Extends into the audience on three sides and is connected to the backstage area by its upstage end. Greater intimacy between performers.	
Lighting Techniques		Sound Effects	Can be pre-recorded or played live. Can reflect what is happening on or off stage. Can be naturalistic or abstract depending on the style of the performance.	Traverse	Like a catwalk, audience sit either side of stage. Brings audience closer to action & creates an intimate/ engaging atmosphere. Could be difficult to use without blocking sight lines.	
Cross Fade	Similar to a fade, a cross fade occurs when one lighting state fades out whilst the other is gradually faded in.	Direction	Speakers and musicians can be positioned anywhere within the space and create impact on an audience.	Promenade	(Immersive) Audience members walk through the space to experience the performance.	
Cue	The indicator of when the next lighting state should take place (usually a line from one of the performers).	PROPS AND STAGE FURNITURE		Site specific theatre	These spaces are chosen as a key part of the production.	
Lighting State	A plan of which lights are being used at any one time.	Props	Any moveable items that the performer uses on stage - does not include costume or scenery.	Amphitheatre	He audience sit in a large and steep half bowl shape with a circular stage at the bottom. Originated from Ancient Greece.	
Snap	Where the lighting changes abruptly from one state to the next.	Stage furniture	Parts of the set that performers can move during the performance. Can communicate location, time period or style, or the status of the characters.			
Fade	Gradually takes in or takes out a lighting state. This could be done quickly or over a more prolonged time period.	Personal props	Props that are used for individual characters. Could help find nuances in the character.			
Blackout	To remove all (or almost all) light on the performing area, usually done rapidly.					
Wash	An even, overall illumination over a large area.					
Focus	To aim and adjust a lens so that the light is concentrated at a focal point.					
Intensity	A measure of strength of a light source in a particular direction.					

