

Paul Webster, Performing Arts and Drama Subject Advisor at Pearson, has produced a guide on how to apply the Digital Theatre Plus resource to BTEC studies of performing arts.



Full Relevance to BTEC Guide

Paul Webster, Performing Arts and Drama Subject Advisor at Pearson, has produced a guide on how to apply the Digital Theatre Plus resource to support teaching and learning on the BTEC level 2 and 3 Performing Arts courses. He uses the *A Doll's House* Making Theatre and Study Guide resources to demonstrate the benefits of:

- Hearing professional actors and theatre-makers talk about their craft: approaches to developing and shaping their work, and making artistic decisions
- Seeing examples of in-depth analyses of the play: the characters and relationships, and the historical and social background of the work
- Exploring the journey of the production: from conception and research through to the performances and the reviews

Paul explains how the materials can be used as examples of approaches of method and technique that students can apply to their own work. How, as tools for learning, the production packs are comprehensive, informative and, most importantly, exciting demonstrations of the fine work produced by contemporary theatre practitioners.

Biography

Paul has worked in the Performing Arts industry as a performer, director and designer. He's worked in schools and FE colleges as a performing arts teacher for eight years, responsible for the planning, delivery and assessment of BTEC and general qualifications in Performing Arts and Drama.

He's been a Standards Verifier and international trainer for BTEC qualifications in Performing Arts, and has had three books published by Pearson to support the work of BTEC Performing Arts learners and teachers.

Paul has worked for Edexcel for seven years, starting in BTEC Assessment where he supported the work of assessors and external verifiers. Over the past four years, Paul has developed all the QCF BTEC qualifications in Performing Arts and Music from levels 1 to 5, and the new NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in Performing Arts.

Paul is currently studying for an MA in Text and Performance at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA).



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On Acting

Seeing the actors talk about the play and their work really emphasizes the amount of research they undertook to understand the play, the intelligence required to play these roles, the decision making, and the collaborative nature of working in a production of this nature.

The opportunity to hear actors discussing their work is very useful for performing arts students when preparing for these roles, other roles, or understanding how professional actors work.

There are three interviews with members of the cast; each one provides their perspective on research, rehearsal and performative aspects of the production.

Hattie Morahan



Plays Nora Helmer, provides:

- An analysis of the play and the characters from the perspective of performance
- A description of the range required to play Nora
- Nora's psychology and her journey through the play
- Guidance on playing a character in a particular historical period



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Dominic Rowan



Plays Torvald Helmer, provides:

- A summary of the character in the given circumstances
- Background of the character e.g. Torvald's illness
- History of the late 19th century
- An analysis of the decisions made by the actor and the director for motivations
- An understanding of the character

Nick Fletcher



Plays Nils Krogstad, talks about:

- The director's system e.g. improvisation based on themes such as money and loss, improvisations directly related to the play and minute analysis of the play e.g. intentions
- The director's focus on analysis and equipping the actor with knowledge rather than 'blocking'
- The fear of complacency as an actor, and how they were encouraged to listen to each other in performance to avoid 'deadly' acting



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Applying to BTEC

The three actors interviews could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 3: Acting Skills

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop your acting skills and review your own practice

- Their interpretation of characters e.g. examining relationship (s) with other characters, considering the given circumstances, applying research findings to the role/character, coherence with the directorial concept

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Characters' social circumstances – job, education, family, etc
- Interpreting the script: clues in the script, including what the characters say about themselves and other characters, stage directions, etc
- The characters' subtext
- The relationship between characters
- The director's vision

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 12: Classical Theatre Performance

Learning Outcome 1: Understand the social, historical and cultural background of classical roles

- Subject matter; political; social

Learning Outcome 2: Be able to explore the performance styles of classical texts

- Language and imagery; psychology of the characters; coherent interpretation; identification and consideration of the author's intentions

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Principles of Acting

Learning Outcome 1: Understand how to interpret and realise text

- Research and analysis: social and historical background; psychological insight; interpretation; other e.g. identification, uniting, comparison, editing

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 20: Applying Acting Styles

Learning Outcome 1: Be able to develop characterisation as an actor

- Research and development: analysis of text to build a character profile; conducting research to build information about character/role; deconstructing a script eg units/objectives/barriers; communication with director and/or company to develop interpretation of the role

Planning for characterisation: observation; background research



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On Directing

In her interview, the director Carrie Cracknell, provides a lot of detail of the process of research:

- Visiting Norway to understand the environment, the architecture and the society
- Using photographs
- Understanding Ibsen's motivations and reasons for writing the play



She discusses the developmental process:

- Creating detailed character biographies e.g education, relationships and a back story
- Detailed analysis of the text
- Creating a structure for the actors, moment-to-moment understanding, not allowing actors to fall into a routine or habit

She provides details on how they rehearse and practise to allow the actors to take risks, and what Simon Stephens' version of the play provides:

- Focus on clarity and use of words
- An unlocking of the characters e.g Torvald is repressed but has a physical need for Nora



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Applying to BTEC

The director's interview could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim A: Explore the historical context of a chosen piece of performance material

- Current events
- Social circumstances
- Cultural factors

Learning Aim B: Consider why a chosen piece of performance material might still be relevant today

- How might modern directors and/or performance companies adapt the work to make it more suitable or relevant to a modern audience?

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Research: the playwright's intentions and how they impact on the play
- Interpreting the script: the significance of the time and place in which the play is set
- The director's vision

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 4: Historical Context of Performance

Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material

- Historical: eg historical events, performance conditions
- Social: eg audience, media, values



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On Design

The designer, Ian McNeill, provides guidance on understanding that the work is created in collaboration with others, and how to communicate with, and appeal to, a contemporary audience about a play written in the late 19th century.



Apply to BTEC

The designer's interview could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim B: Consider why a chosen piece of performance material might still be relevant today

- Why is the piece still relevant to the world today?
- How might modern directors and/or performance companies adapt the work to make it more suitable or relevant to a modern audience?

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Design Planning for Performance

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop design ideas

- Exploring the stimulus by considering the place and time in which the performance is set
- The social context of the performance

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 4: Historical Context of Performance



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Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material



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On Choreography

The choreographer Quinny Sacks explains her approaches to:

- Developing a relationship between choreographer and director
- Teaching actors to dance
- The background and 'purpose' of the Tarantella dance, and developing it into performance



Apply to BTEC

The choreographer's interview could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 39: Choreographic Principles

- Learning Outcome 1: Be able to apply compositional structures and devices in the creation of dance work
- Learning Outcome 2: Know how to respond to, and work with, different stimuli



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Study Guide

The study guide has been produced and written by the award winning playwright Ella Hickson.

Every part of the Study Guide can be downloaded as PDF's.

The most impressive aspect of the materials here are the fact that there is a significant amount of useful information, research, analysis and guidance on the text that complements the recordings of the performance and the production team, rather than repeats it.

Characters

Includes character descriptions, extracts of dialogue, and questions about the characters.

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This could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 3: Acting Skills

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop your acting skills and review your own practice

- Their interpretation of characters e.g. examining relationship (s) with other characters, considering the given circumstances, applying research findings to the role/character

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Characters' social circumstances – job, education, family
- Interpreting the script: clues in the script, including what the characters say about themselves and other characters, stage directions, etc
- The characters' subtext
- The relationship between characters



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BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 12: Classical Theatre Performance

Learning Outcome 1: Understand the social, historical and cultural background of classical roles

- Social and historical: subject matter; political; social

Learning Outcome 2: Be able to explore the performance styles of classical texts

- Research and analysis: language and imagery; psychology of the characters; coherent interpretation; identification and consideration of the author's intentions

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Principles of Acting

Learning Outcome 1: Understand how to interpret and realise text

- Research and analysis: social and historical background; psychological insight; interpretation; other eg identification, uniting, comparison, editing

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 20: Applying Acting Styles

Learning Outcome 1: Be able to develop characterisation as an actor

- Research and development: assessing function/relevance of characterisation; analysis of text to build a character profile; conducting research to build information about character/role; deconstructing a script eg units/objectives/barriers; communication with director and/or company to develop interpretation of the role
- Planning for characterisation: observation; background research; issues of status/power; exploration

Relationship map

A diagram showing how the characters relate to one another and their main interaction in the play

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Learning Aim A: Explore and develop your acting skills and review your own practice

- Their interpretation of characters

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- The relationship between characters
- The director's vision

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 12: Classical Theatre Performance

- Learning Outcome 1: Understand the social, historical and cultural background of classical roles
- Learning Outcome 2: Be able to explore the performance styles of classical texts

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Principles of Acting

- Learning Outcome 1: Understand how to interpret and realise text

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 20: Applying Acting Styles

- Learning Outcome 1: Be able to develop characterisation as an actor

Plot summary

Detailed description of the action, with relevant extracts from the text.

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Learning Aim A: Explore and develop your acting skills and review your own practice

- Their interpretation of characters

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Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play



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- Interpreting the script: clues in the script, including what the characters say about themselves and other characters, stage directions, etc.

Language

Analysis of the style of the text, meaning and symbolism.

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This could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim A: Explore the historical context of a chosen piece of performance material

- Current events
- Social circumstances
- Cultural factors

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Research: the playwright's intentions and how they impact on the play
- Interpreting the script: the information the play gives the actor in terms of interpretation
- The style and staging of the play

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 4: Historical Context of Performance

- Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material

Context

Investigating the original performance conditions (cultural, social and political) and whether the play can still be relevant today.

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BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim A: Explore the historical context of a chosen piece of performance material

- Current events
- Social circumstances
- Cultural factors

Learning Aim B:

- Why is the piece still relevant to the world today?
- How might modern directors and/or performance companies adapt the work to make it more suitable or relevant to a modern audience?

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Research: the playwright's intentions and how they impact on the play
- Interpreting the script: the significance of the time and place in which the play is set
- The director's vision

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 4: Historical Context of Performance

Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material

- Historical: eg historical events, performance conditions, influences, practitioners
- Social: eg audience, media, values, fashion
- Political: eg censorship, legislation, propaganda, current events, satire

Learning Outcome 2: Know how to contextualise current practical work

- Context: eg relationship between historical contexts and own practice, director's concept

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 12: Classical Theatre Performance

Learning Outcome 1: Understand the social, historical and cultural background of classical roles

- Social and historical: subject matter; political; social

Learning Outcome 2: Be able to explore the performance styles of classical texts

- Research and analysis: identification and consideration of the author's intentions



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BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Principles of Acting

Learning Outcome 1: Understand how to interpret and realise text

- Research and analysis: social and historical background

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 20: Applying Acting Styles

Learning Outcome 1: Be able to develop characterisation as an actor

- Planning for characterisation: background research

Playwright

Apply to BTEC

This could be used for the following qualifications and units:

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim A: Explore the historical context of a chosen piece of performance material

- Historical context: who created it? Where was it created? Why was it created?

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Research: the playwright's intentions and how they impact on the play
- Interpreting the script: the significance of the time and place in which the play is set

BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts – Unit 4: Historical Context of Performance

- Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material

Themes

Detailed analysis of the themes and issues of the play.

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BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 9: Performance in Context

Learning Aim A: Explore the historical context of a chosen piece of performance material

- Historical context: what is the piece about? Why was it created?
- Social circumstances

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 15: Performing Scripted Plays

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop a role from a scripted play

- Research: the play's themes and issues
- Interpreting the script: the information the play gives the actor in terms of interpretation

BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts – Unit 19: Design Planning for Performance

Learning Aim A: Explore and develop design ideas

- Exploring the stimulus by considering the place and time in which the performance is set
- The social context of the performance

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- Learning Outcome 1: Know the historical context of performance material

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- Learning Outcome 1: Understand the social, historical and cultural background of classical roles
- Learning Outcome 2: Be able to explore the performance styles of classical texts

