

# Introduction

This pack is intended mainly for Key Stage 3 drama lessons. The mini-plays are a practical way of introducing script. A class of students working in small groups can read, learn, rehearse and perform a script in one lesson. Because each script has follow-up activities, mini-plays are also useful for cover lessons when the regular drama teacher is absent. Alternatively, the follow-up activities can be set for homework. These activities can be used to introduce set and costume design and other technical aspects of theatrical production of the kind that students might encounter at GCSE.

The scripts are exercises in style; they borrow from existing film, TV and theatre styles and genres such as melodrama and horror. Each mini-play is a call to action and it is the job of the students to take the words and turn them into physical activity. The scripts allow the drama teacher to take students away from static desk-bound reading, to use the plays as a vehicle to teach presentational skills.

At Key Stage 3, mini-plays can be used as a starting point for coursework units on scriptwriting. Mini-plays are also useful as short exercises with GCSE groups, particularly when used with the exercises outlined in the companion publication *Playing With Text* (Pearson Publishing, 2001).

The mini-plays include the following features:

- each play is written for groups of four students but most could be played by three or five
- in each play every student speaks two or three times
- each play lasts about two minutes in performance
- to allow for ease of casting, many characters are non-gender specific
- every script includes follow-up activities
- each play can be performed on its own, but some are episodes in a mini-serial.

## Using mini-plays

- 1 The script is read with the students. With cliffhanger serials it is important not to read ahead and thus reveal the whole story. Let each episode be a surprise, so that students arrive at the next lesson wondering what is going to happen.
- 2 Alternatively, do not read the mini-serial with the class but give out all the episodes in the same lesson. Because each group is working on a different episode, the final performance will come as a surprise when they see the whole serial performed.

# The Monster of Doctor Frankenstein

*(Inside the laboratory of Doctor Frankenstein.)*

**Frankenstein:** Igor, make the connections.

**Igor:** Yes Master. *(Igor connects the dead body to the machinery.)*

*(Enter Doctor Waldheim, a visitor.)*

**Waldheim:** Frankenstein, what on earth are you doing?

**Frankenstein:** Stand back! I am about to create life!

**Waldheim:** Frankenstein! Are you insane?

**Igor:** Master, shall I turn up the electricity?

**Frankenstein:** Yes! Turn it up all the way!

**Waldheim:** This is madness!

**Frankenstein:** Look! The creature is moving! I have created a living being.

**Igor:** Congratulations Master! *(The creature slowly rises and awkwardly starts to walk.)* It walks!

**Waldheim:** What a foul and ugly thing it is. *(The creature turns towards Waldheim and then begins to advance slowly towards him.)* Keep it away from me. Back! Back, I say!

**Igor:** Master! Do something!

**Frankenstein:** *(He gets between the creature and Waldheim.)* Stop! Stop at once. Now back. Back! Back! *(He backs the creature into a room.)* Quick Igor, lock the door before it escapes.

*(Igor locks the door.)*



## Follow-up activities

- For homework, write the next scene. When you write it, give each character two to three lines.
- Rehearse and perform the play you have written or give the play to another group to rehearse and perform.

# Space Wars: Episode 1

*(Two members of the Intergalactic Rebel Alliance enter. They have transported into the Imperial Starship.)*

- Rebel 1: Okay, we've transported into the Imperial Starship. What now?
- Rebel 2: Simple, we steal the computer codes and transport back to base.
- Rebel 1: The problem is we don't know where the computer room is.
- Rebel 2: So, how are we going to find it?
- Rebel 1: We'd better split up and look. Whoever finds it first contacts the other on the communicator.

*(Rebels 1 and 2 exit. Guards 1 and 2 enter.)*

- Guard 1: I thought I heard spies. We'd better go and find them. They went down there, come on.
- Guard 2: Are you sure this is a good idea? There might be lots of them.
- Guard 1: The orders are to capture any spies alive and take them to the Emperor.
- Guard 2: The Emperor's really scary. We'd better find them because he'll do something horrible to us if we don't.

*(The guards exit. Rebel 1 enters.)*

- Rebel 1: Which way now? Where's the computer room? It could be anywhere.

*(The guards enter behind Rebel 1. They have their space guns in their hands.)*

- Guard 2: Don't move! Stay where you are!
- Guard 1: We've got you now! You're going to meet the Emperor, and you won't like that.



## Follow-up activities

- In groups, discuss what you think is going to happen in the next scene.
- Devise and perform what you think happens in the next scene.
- For homework, write the next scene. When you write it, give each character two to three lines.
- Rehearse and perform the scene you have written or give the scene to another group to rehearse and perform.

# The Donkey's Head from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*(A group of friends has gathered in a wood to rehearse a play called The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. A mischievous fairy called Puck comes across them in the forest as they rehearse their play.)*

- Puck:** *(Seeing that they are rehearsing a play.)* What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor; an actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.
- Bottom:** *(He is speaking his lines from the play.)* But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile, and by and by I will to thee appear. *(He goes behind a bush so that he can be 'off stage'.)*
- Puck:** A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. *(He follows Bottom behind the bush.)*
- Flute:** *(He is speaking his lines from the play.)* As true as the truest horse that yet would never tire, I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.
- Quince:** Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire'. *(Bottom comes out from behind the bush; his own head has been replaced by that of a donkey; of course, he doesn't know. Quince and Snout are terrified.)* O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted.
- Puck:** I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round, through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier! *(Puck chases Quince and Flute around the forest and finally off stage.)*
- Bottom:** Why do they run away? This is a knavery of them to make me afraid.
- Flute:** *(He comes back to stare at Bottom.)* O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee? *(He runs off as Quince comes back on to stare at Bottom.)*
- Quince:** Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated.
- Bottom:** I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could.



## Follow-up activities

- To help you with your performance of the scene, so that the audience can see the change, draw the face of the donkey on a piece of A4 card and use this as a mask when you perform the play. You will need to take account of the fact that you can't cover the actor's mouth because if you do the audience won't hear him/her.
- If you were producing this mini-play in the theatre, you would need a costume for Puck. Draw a costume, including hair and make-up design, in colour, for Puck's costume.

# The Acme Homework Machine

*(Not all plays have a story. Some plays can look and sound like the sort of advertisement you see on television. In a play of this style, all the actors say their lines straight to the audience.)*

Actor 1: Are you tired?

*(Actor 1 points to Actors 2, 3 and 4, who have made a freeze-frame of looking tired.)*

Actor 2: Are you bored?

*(Everyone changes position. Actor 2 points to Actors 1, 3 and 4 who have made a freeze-frame of looking bored.)*

Actor 3: Doing too much homework?

*(Everyone changes position. Actor 3 points to Actors 1, 2 and 4 who are doing a mime of students frantically scribbling homework.)*

Actor 4: Would you rather be out playing with your friends?

*(Everyone changes position. Actors 1, 2 and 3 enthusiastically nod their heads.)*

Actor 1: You need the Acme Homework Machine.

Actor 2: Just type in the questions.

*(Actors 1, 3 and 4 mime typing.)*

Put your book in the machine.

*(Actors 1, 3 and 4 mime putting books in the machine.)*

Let the Acme Homework Machine do the rest!

Actor 3: I've got an Acme Homework Machine and it changed my life. Now I can play on my computer all the time. *(Actor 3 mimes playing a computer game.)*

Actor 4: I've got an Acme Homework Machine and it changed my life. Now I can watch TV all the time. *(Actor 4 mimes watching TV.)*

Actor 1: I've got an Acme Homework Machine and it changed my life. Now I can lie in bed all the time. Goodnight! *(Actor 1 waves at the audience and curls up on the floor.)*

Actor 2: That's right folks. Get a life. Get an Acme Homework Machine and change your lives.

Actor 3: You'll never regret it.

Actor 4: The Acme Homework Machine, the key to a happy school life.



## Follow-up activities

- Write and perform your own advertisement for the Acme Homework Machine.
- Invent a fantastic imaginary product and write an advertisement to sell it.