

Production Notes

Teachers should not hesitate to cut and adapt the plays to suit the groups that they teach.

Physical theatre

In one form or another all the plays are written as pieces of physical theatre. Students should be encouraged to experiment with physical action, stylised movement and dance drama. This should also include using actors to play objects.

Music and sound effects

Students should use live or recorded music and sound effects as part of the production. Music and sound effects can be used:

- to create atmosphere
- to underscore dramatic moments and action
- for movement and dance drama
- to suggest the location of the action.

Costume

Costume should reflect the stylised nature of the plays; there is no need to costume the plays 'realistically'. Students should experiment with costume: many of the plays can be performed in black with the addition of small items of clothing like scarves, headscarves, hats, coats, armbands, false beards and moustaches, etc. In many of the plays it is acceptable and interesting for actors to change costume in full view of the audience, providing it is done quickly and theatrically.

Props, set and scenery

Props should be kept to essentials and often these props do not have to be realistic – a two-dimensional cardboard cut-out can be more theatrically effective than the 'real' thing. None of these plays require much in the way of scenery and any form of 'realistic' scenery is best avoided.

Written signs, sound effects, lighting or music can easily designate locations. It would be useful to have simple entrances and exits – a basic set consisting of two book flats would be ideal. A book flat is a pair of 'flats' that are hinged together so that they are free-standing like an open book. Hinging two lightweight doors together can make a cheap book flat. These are available at any DIY shop. Curtains could also be used. Encourage students to experiment with projected images: OHP transparencies for colour printers are available and make excellent backgrounds for plays. Many schools now have video projectors and these can also be utilised to great effect.

Lighting

Do not use blackouts; they will spoil the flow of the plays. Instead, use lights to create atmosphere and use spotlights to focus audience attention.

Keeping the actors on stage

In many of the plays, the actors stay on stage all the time. Students should be encouraged to be inventive about what they do when they are not directly part of the action at a given moment in the play.

Chairs and tables

Anyone who has seen a number of GCSE plays will realise how often the student actors remain seated and how often they sit behind tables. Sitting down reduces the opportunities for movement and physicality as well as being theatrically dull. On a simple level the teacher should start by banning chairs and tables in the production, then they should be allowed only after negotiation. Nevertheless, the use of chairs is fine if they have symbolic meaning (eg a single chair under a single spotlight is charged with potential and meaning), or when chairs are used to represent something else like cars and trains.

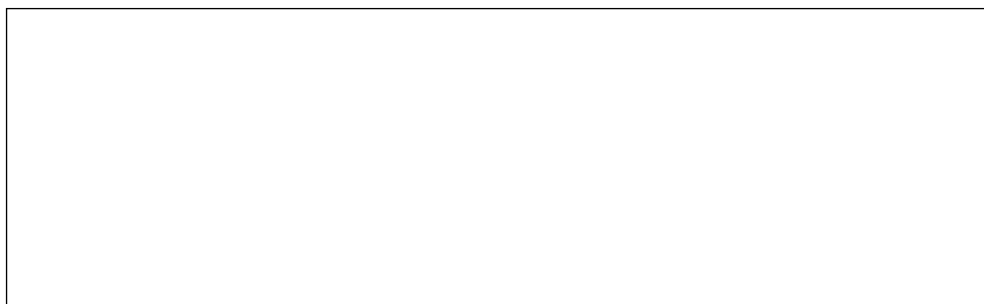
Student Sheet

'The Government Inspector' is written for six actors but it could be played by more or less. The play deliberately has few stage directions. Try to figure out from the dialogue what might be happening on the stage. The script gives you plenty of opportunity to include your own ideas. Remember, an audience goes to watch a play. What are you going to give your audience to watch as well as listen to? Here are some things to consider when you come to produce the play:

It is common practice in the theatre to set the scene for a play with a piece of music. Which piece of music could you use to set the scene?



There is a moment in the play when you are asked to use music. Which piece of music are you going to use?



Make a list of moments in the play where it might be interesting to use short bursts of music.



How could you costume the play? (It would be interesting to experiment with lots of hats, coats, scarves and false beards.)



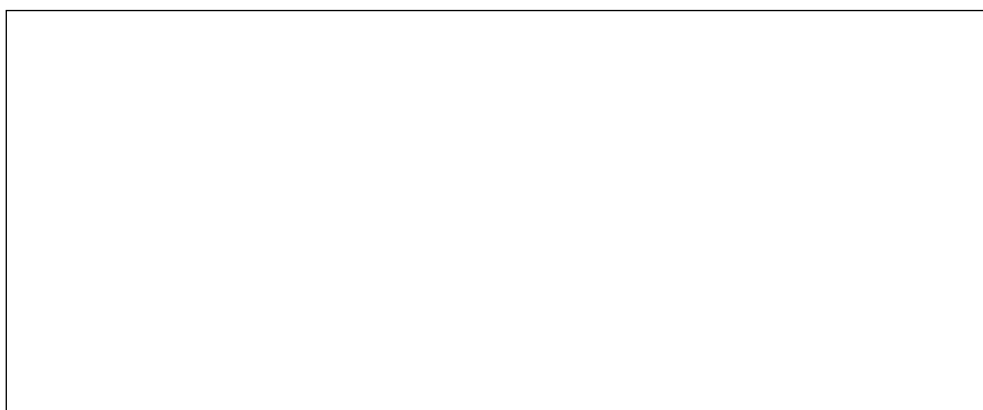
The play requires some simple props. Go through the script and make a list of the props you need.



Some of the lines in the play are 'asides' to be spoken directly to the audience. How will you perform these?



Notes



The Government Inspector

A comedy based on the play by Gogol

- Actor 1: Pray be seated.
- Actor 2: After you.
- Actor 3: Sorry.
- Actor 4: No, after you.
- Actor 5: After you.
- Actor 6: Sorry.
- Actor 2: No, I'm sorry.
- Actor 3: You're sorry?
- Actor 4: Please take a seat.
- Actor 5: Your seat?
- Actor 6: My seat!
- Actor 1: Stop this at once! If you do not stop, I shall cut off your privileges.
- Actor 2: No more tea and buns!
- Actor 3: No more coffee and bourbon!
- Actor 4: No more cakes and ale!
- Actor 5: Who votes we sit down? Good! Unanimous! Then let us be seated.
- Actor 1: I call the meeting of the town council to order. Dreadful news! A friend of a friend of a friend of a friend has whispered to me that a government inspector is coming to our town inognito, in secret, to inspect things.
- Actor 2: Inspect!
- Actor 3: In town!
- Actor 4: Inognito!
- Actor 5: In secret!
- Actor 6: We're done for! Had it! Kaput!
- Actor 2: The traffic's appalling – cars everywhere, nothing but jams! The traffic never moves!
- Actor 3: The hospitals are full of sick people! They even put them in cupboards.
- Actor 4: The schools are useless – the pupils don't know anything! I blame the teachers!
- Actor 6: The town's a mess! It's chaos out there I tell you! We'll all lose our jobs.
- Actor 1: Decisive action's called for! We need reports!
- Actor 2: Research!

Actor 3: Consultants!
Actor 4: A mission statement!
Actor 5: Targets!
Actor 6: Aims and objectives!
Actor 1: Agreed!
All: Agreed.
Actor 1: To work!

(Much action as piles of paper are produced)

Actor 1: There. Finished!
Actor 2: Accomplished!
Actor 3: Achieved!
Actor 4: Completed!
Actor 5: Concluded!
Actor 6: Done!
Actor 1: Look how busy we've been. Look at all this beautiful paper. I love paper! Sheets and sheets of beautiful word-processed and photocopied paper. I love it! My darling photocopier, I love you! I love you! I love you! Now we really are ready for the government inspector!
Actor 2: But!
Actor 3: But!
Actor 4: But!
Actor 1: But? But? But?
Actor 2: The traffic's still appalling.
Actor 3: The hospitals are still full.
Actor 4: The pupils still know nothing!
All: Agh! Nothing's changed! It's chaos out there.
Actor 1: But the paper! The beautiful paper!
All: Useless!
Actor 1: We have to do something!
Actor 2: But we're the town council – we never do anything!
Actor 1: Our jobs are at stake! The mayoral limousine! The company cars! The cakes and ale! The tea and buns! We'll all be out of a job!
All: Agh!
Actor 3: I have a plan!
All: Saved!
Actor 3: An action plan! Read this! You do the roads. You deal with the hospitals. And you sort out the schools. To work!