



25+ YEARS OF EXCELLENCE



STUDY GUIDE

DISS

WRITTEN BY REX DEVERELL
DIRECTED BY DUNCAN MCCALLUM

157 Carlton Street, Suite 201, Toronto, ON M5A 2K3

Phone 416-515-8080

Fax 416-515-1832

info@mixedcompanytheatre.com

www.mixedcompanytheatre.com

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Cast & Crew 2009

Mickey Rodriguez
Sefton Jackson
Oneko McTaggart
Trevor Williams
Nnika Knight
Heather Cherron
Selick Idahosa
Desron McKie
Ghislain Gashema
Tsatse Hargoe
Renate Pohl

MCT Staff & Consultants

Simon Malbogat
Duncan McCallum
Daniel Booth
Maureen Verboom
Deidre Budgell
Ainsley Skye Head
K.E. Lyn Royce
Gurpreet Kaur Sodhi
Alex Mayer
Kendra Marr
Megan McKeigan
Samantha Calder-Sprackman

Interns

Brigid Tierney, Amy Connolly, Robyn Laliberte

Study Guide created by Amy Connolly

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A NOTE FOR TEACHERS

RESOURCES & LESSONS

The resources and lessons provided are templates to work from. All resources should be adapted to the unique dynamics of each class to make for an inclusive, equitable, and respectful classroom for all students.

Module 1: Engagement

1.1 Introduction to Mixed Company Theatre

A. Goals of DISS:

The intent of DISS is to explore the issue of gang presence in neighbourhoods and the pressures youth face finding social connection and identity. The show deals with several of the factors that affect young people living with gang violence in their communities: snitching, family relationships, friendship, theft and gun violence. This play was created in collaboration with youth who have experienced violence. More generally, it is intended that *DISS* will stimulate students' critical thinking and engage them in active problem solving.

B. Explanation of Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is an interactive approach that involves the audience in developing real-time strategies for dealing with social and personal issues. In a Mixed Company production, a story representing an issue is created, rehearsed, and performed. The story is then presented again—only this second time, audience members can intervene in the story as "spect-actors," to create a positive alternative ending. A trained Forum Theatre facilitator (the Joker) prepares and encourages participants to replace the actors on stage and to change the story in a constructive way.

C. Caveat: Statement/Issues of Disclosure

Mixed Company Theatre does not ask for or encourage personal disclosure from students during the course of the show. However, the production deals with sensitive issues. Sometimes, during the interactive segment of the performance, a student may either disclose or otherwise be adversely affected by recalling incidents they have experienced. Mixed Company Theatre therefore **STRONGLY** recommends that a representative from your school's guidance department be present at the show and available as a referral option for students dealing with these issues. Please feel free to forward this guide to your school's guidance department for their information. The Appendix section of this document also contains resources for teachers and students to access information and support from organizations who have expertise in the issues addressed in *DISS*.

D. Pre-Show Principles

Please review the following theatre guidelines with your students prior to the performance:

- Please be considerate: talking, whispering, snacking , or shuffling about seats disrupts the actors and distracts the audience
- Please remain seated during the performance. Plan washroom visits for before or after the show.
- Taking photographs and recording sound or video during a performance is strictly prohibited by Canadian Actor's Equity regulations.

1.2 DISS

A. Synopsis

DISS explores the risks involved in choosing where you belong. More specifically, it looks at the issue of gang presence in neighbourhoods and the pressures youth face finding social connection and identity. This theatrical presentation, which was created in collaboration with youth that have experienced violence, follows the characters Sam, Tracy, Tyrone and Jesse, as they navigate from the beginnings of childhood friendships which have evolved into a neighbourhood youth gang.

Questions that can be derived from the play:

1. What do gangs offer to potential members that is appealing and that young people might be lacking in other areas of their lives?
2. Many factors are at work in this play, the sum of which leads some of the characters to think of joining a gang as a considerable option. What roles do poverty and unemployment play in gangs and gang membership?
3. What is the reaction of families to their children's' involvement in a gangs?
4. What can youth do to prevent their friends from getting involved? What can be done, as a community, to prevent young people from wanting to get involved in gangs?
5. How has Hollywood and other celebrity culture glamourized drugs and gangs?
6. How is snitching regarded in our culture?

B. Character Breakdown

Maizie - Maizie is the mother of Sam and Tracy. She has recently moved her two children to Canada in an attempt to move forward after her husband's tragic death. She wants the best for her children, but isn't sure how to cope with the fact that her son is drifting from home life.

Sam - Sammy is Maizie's son, and friends with Tyrone and Jesse. He is strong, smart and adaptable. He is new to his community and struggles to fit in with his new friends while keeping his sister safe.

Tracy - Tracy is Maizie's daughter and Sam's younger sister. She is straight-laced, and hard-working. She cares deeply about her family and does her best to keep the tensions between her brother and mother to a minimum. She doesn't understand the changes she begins to see in her brother. Tracy has a crush on Jesse.

Jesse - Jesse is friends with Sam and Tyrone. He's confident, street smart and accustomed to being the alpha male. Jesse is very smooth in his dealings and never reveals his true intentions. He wants power over everyone and everything. During the course of the play, he takes Sam under his wing and shows him the ropes of his world.

Tyrone - Tyrone is friends with Sam and Jesse. He's hot-headed and not respected by the other youth, and as a result feels the need to assert himself. He's also interested in Tracy.

Please refer to APPENDIX A of this study guide for a scene-by-scene breakdown of DISS.

1.3 Activities & Lesson Plans

**NOTE: All curriculum codes are taken from the following Ontario Ministry of Education's curriculum documents and are current as of April 2011:*

- The Arts, Grades 9 and 10, 2010 (revised)*
- The Arts, Grades 11 and 12, 2010 (revised)*
- English, Grades 9 and 10, 2007 (revised)*
- English, Grades 11 and 12, 2007 (revised)*
- Health and Physical Education, Grades 9 to 12, 1999*
- Social Sciences and Humanities, Grades 9 and 10, 1999*
- Social Sciences and Humanities, Grades 11 and 12, 2000*

**NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, codes have been taken from "Applied" course curricula (at the Grade 9 and 10 level) and "Workplace Preparation" course curricula (at the Grade 11 and 12 level). However, the activities are designed to be modified to work in both University and College preparation classes, as well. Some modifications have been suggested.*

C. Pre-Show Activities

ACTIVITY 1

Warm-Up: Brainstorming Thoughts

Subjects: Media Studies, English, Drama

Grades: 9-12 Time: 60 mins

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English – Oral Communication 2.1-2.6

Drama – A1.1, A3.1, C1.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 10

English – Oral Communication 2.1-2.6

Drama – A1.1, B1.1, B2.2, C1.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 11

English – Oral Communication 2.1-2.6

Drama (Open) – A1.1, B1.1, B2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

Drama – B1.1, B1.3, C1.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

- To encourage students to begin thinking about the subject matter of DISS.
- To assess their awareness of media portrayal of these issues.

PART A: Letter-sized Sheets of Paper (1 per student)
and Writing Utensils
PART B: Chart papers and Markers

[illegible]

- Divide the students into three groups. Assign each group a topic: *Cities*, *Families*, and *Gangs*.
- Explain to students the concept of mind-mapping. “A mind map is a diagram that represents connections between ideas that are arranged from a central key idea. Mind maps are used to brainstorm, visualize, organize, and structure ideas.” (Project ACT study guide, Winter 2010) Using mind-mapping, ask each individual to brainstorm words, ideas and images they associate with their assigned topic.
- Let students work this way for awhile. Then ask them to convene in their groups and discuss their mind-maps. What commonalities can they find?

Part B:

- In the separate groups, have students record on the chart paper the key points of overlap between their individual mind-maps.
- Ask them to consider the following questions:
 - What stereotypes come to mind with your topic? What truths come to mind? What news-media attention do these groups receive? What associations are made with the groups in film and television? Do they affect the attitude of youth through their various portrayals, positively or negatively?

Part C:

English and Media Studies: In their groups, ask the students to talk about previous discussion points for several minutes. Then give them time to create a short, 2 minute presentation for the class about their impressions of the media portrayal on their topic. These mini-presentations can be a jumping off point for a research paper about a number of topics (ie: Gang violence in the media and movies, the portrayal of urban families in the media, etc.)

Drama: Students will form a tableau image in their groups that most resonates with them about their group's assigned word. The groups should take turns presenting their tableau for the class, while the other part of the class becomes the audience. The audience views each tableau separately with the teacher, who asks, "What do we see?" (They are asking for a literal perspective; a denotation of the image). The teacher then asks, "What do we observe?" (They are looking for an interpretation; a connotation of the image).

Tableau: is a still image, a frozen moment, or a "photograph" created by posing still bodies. It aims to represent and communicate an event, idea or feeling. The technique combines the forms of the theatre with painting and photography.

Group Discussion:

In a circle, the class holds a "talking stick" discussion where each student paraphrases the feelings of the person who spoke before them, and then contributes by offering their views on the following questions:

- Were there similarities between the issues explored the three groups? What were the differences? How do these three factors affect one another? Are you able to relate any of the subject matter to your own life?

A **talking stick** is used by a group to discuss a topic in an egalitarian manner. Students sit in a circle and can only speak when they are holding the talking stick. The purpose is to allow every student a chance to speak and be listened to by the whole group.

**NOTE: Make sure the student agrees with the other person's paraphrase of their thoughts to ensure that every student is being interpreted correctly.*

Module 2: Understanding

2.1. Information Factsheets

A. The Facts – “Youth Gangs in Canada – What do we know?”

What is a youth gang?

Youth gangs typically consist of young people who:

- self-identify as a group (e.g. have a group name)
- are generally perceived by others as a distinct group
- are involved in a significant number of delinquent incidents that produce consistent negative responses from the community and/or law enforcement agencies.

There are other important characteristics of a youth gang that help us to understand the phenomenon. The Montréal Police Service's definition of youth gang explicitly incorporates the anti-social and delinquent behaviours that are distinctive of youth gangs. It defines a youth gang as:

"An organized group of adolescents and/or young adults who rely on group intimidation and violence, and commit criminal acts in order to gain power and recognition and/or control certain areas of unlawful activity."

Who joins youth gangs?

The 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs and other sources suggest that youth gang members cut across many ethnic, geographic, demographic and socio-economic contexts. However, youth at risk of joining gangs or already involved in gangs tend to be from groups that suffer from the greatest levels of inequality and social disadvantage.

Many youth who join gangs have also been identified as youth who are using drugs and already involved in serious and violent crime. Furthermore, youth who display higher levels of previous delinquency are more likely to remain in the gang.

The reasons for joining a youth gang are various. Some seek excitement; others are looking for prestige, protection, a chance to make money or a sense of belonging.

Results of the *Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs*

Youth gangs are not just an urban phenomenon. They are active across the country in both large and small communities.

Results of the Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs and other sources suggest that youth gangs are a growing concern in many Canadian jurisdictions. Although not to the same extent as in the United States, comparisons between the two countries show that almost twice the percentage of jurisdictions in the United States report active youth gangs as compared with those in Canada.

The Survey asked police officers to estimate the number of youth gangs in their jurisdiction. According to these estimates:

- Canada has 434 youth gangs with roughly 7,000 members nationally.
- Ontario has the highest number of youth gangs and youth gang members in absolute terms, with 216 youth gangs and 3,320 youth gang members. Saskatchewan is second (28 youth gangs and 1,315 members), followed by British Columbia (102 youth gangs and 1,027 members).
- For the country as a whole, the vast majority of youth gang members are male (94%).
- Almost half (48%) of all youth gang members are under the age of 18. Most (39%) are between 16 and 18 years old.
- The largest proportion of youth gang members are African Canadian (25%), followed by First Nations (21%) and Caucasian (18%).
- Police agencies and Aboriginal organizations indicate that there is a growing percentage of female gang membership in western Canadian provinces, including British Columbia (12%), Manitoba (10%) and Saskatchewan (9%).

Gangs, crime and violence

The movement of gang members from one jurisdiction to another appears to have an impact on the criminal activities and involvement of youth, as does the return of gang-involved youth or adult inmates from correctional facilities.

From a prevention perspective, it is vital to understand that youth involvement in crime and violence is linked with the experience of the gang itself.

Gangs, guns and drugs in schools

Gun violence in major cities in Canada has been a growing concern, especially in Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Montréal.

Gun violence is also more prevalent among street gangs that involve primarily young men less than 30 years of age.

The Drugs, Alcohol and Violence International (DAVI) study, a joint Canada-U.S. effort, provides important evidence about the relationships between gangs, guns and drugs in Toronto and Montréal. A total of 904 male students (grades 9 to 12), school dropouts and young offenders were interviewed. The results indicate that:

- There is a correlation between gang presence in schools and the availability of both guns and drugs in schools.
- 18.7% of boys (ages 14 to 17) in Montréal and 15.1% in Toronto have brought a gun to school.
- School dropouts who get involved in drug selling are at higher risk of being involved in gun-related violence.

Conclusion

Most youth who join gangs have already been involved in crime, violence and illegal drug use. The prevalence and scope of youth gang involvement varies across the country, but the "gang effect" of increased delinquency, drug use and violence is a common thread.

Integrated, targeted and evidence-based community solutions are necessary to reduce and prevent the proliferation of gangs, drugs and gun violence.

2.1 B. In Their Own Words - *Testimonials from Interviews with Toronto-Area Youth Gangs*

"It's like people in my neighbourhood give you respect when you is in the gang. They know who you are and they don't mess. Nobody knew me before I got involved. Now I'm famous in my area. People know me now." (male, 22 years)

"It's like the only jobs they got for poor black people is like Macdonalds or Wendy's or other bullshit like that. Low, low pay, no respect. You basically just a slave, just a punk while some fat owner gets rich. I'm not going down like that. I'm my own boss, make way more money and don't sell myself out to shit like that. I'd rather die than embarrass myself like that." (male, 23 years)

"In my area, man, if you ain't with a gang your gonna get punked and jumped all the time. If ya can't beat em join em. The gang got your back and people don't mess with you cause they know you got backup." (female, 19)

"The gang is like my family man. They got my back. When you need something like some clothes or some food or some money or a place to crash they are there. When

you need to talk they are there. When you got a beef they got your back. I love these guys man. They are my blood, my heart.” (male, 22 years)

“What chance has a guy like me got in the real world. A poor black guy? Schools are shit, teachers don’t think you can do the work. Nobody’s gonna give me a job. So I’ll get paid and live in another way, in another world where I can get respect and nobody cares what I look like or where I come from. I know I’ll probably die young or go to jail, but what other chance is there?” (male, 22)

“I’m poor and white. Poor whites get nothin in Canada. I can’t claim racism, can’t get no special programming or special help in school. I’m no refugee. Your white and a guy so nobody gives you any sympathy. They just expect you to be okay. Immigrants get all the jobs and breaks. So I just give up and will do the crime thing. At least you have fun, get respect from your friends. When you don’t give a shit you stop worrying and it’s not so bad. Drugs and drinking help to.” (male, 19)

“If I thought I could get out and get a real job that pays good I would. But I’m not some spoiled kid. My daddy ain’t gonna give me a car when I graduate and send me to Europe for a vacation. Some white kids in my high school just got that shit. It’s like they expected it. My mom don’t have no money to send me to university. See –I got no chance. So I do what I have to do. At least I have my pride. I can be brave and fight and make some money....but really I’ve just kinda given up.” (male, 24 years)

2.2 Activities and Lesson Plans

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A. Post-Show Activities

ACTIVITY 1

Debriefing DISS

(Adapted from Project ACT Study Guide, 2010)

Subjects: English, Music, Drama, Media Studies

Grades:9-12

Time: 30 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English – Oral Communication 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Drama – A3.1, B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B2.2, C1.1, C1.2, C2.2, C3.1, C3.2

Music – B1.1, B2.2, C1.1

GRADE 10

English - Oral Communication 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Drama – A3.1, B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B2.2, C1.1, C1.2, C2.2, C3.1, C3.2

Music – B1.1, B2.1, B2.3, C1.1

GRADE 11

English - Oral Communication 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Drama – B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2, C1.1, C1.2, C2.2

Music - B1.2, B1.3, B2.1, B2.3, C1.1

Media Studies – A1.3, B1.1, B1.2, B1.3

GRADE 12

English - Oral Communication 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Drama – B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2, B2.3, C1.1, C1.2,

Music - B1.2, B1.3, B2.3, B3.1, C1.1

OBJECTIVES

- To debrief the performance using questions that will encourage group discussion.
- To encourage the students to deconstruct and think critically about the topics presented in the performance.
- Provide the opportunity for students to represent their own perspectives upon the issues.

MATERIALS

Talking Stick

Part A:

- Organize the students to form a circle.
- Using a “talking stick”, ask the students to say one thing they *liked* about the performance and one thing they *learned*.

Part B:

- After each student has a chance to speak, ask them to highlight the issues that were discussed. What were the issues presented? Did they escalate or de-escalate at any point?
- Did the students have any concerns about the issues and/or interventions presented in the performance?
- What changes would they have made to resolve these problems?

Part C: Group Discussion

- Why are these issues important to discuss in general and in schools?

NOTE: These topics can be very sensitive for some individuals and discussion about them often open the door to other issues. To ensure the safety of all students, please handle discussions with care.

ACTIVITY 2

UNDERSTANDING A COMPLICATED ISSUE

(Adapted from Project ACT Study Guide, 2010)

Subjects: Drama, English

Grades: 9-12

Time: 120 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English – Oral Communication: 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

Drama – A1.3, A2.1, B1.1, B2.2, C2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 10

English – Oral Communication: 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

Drama – A1.3, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, B2.2, C2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 11

English – Oral Communication 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6

Drama (Open)– A1.3, B2.1, B2.2, B2.3, B2.4, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 12

English – Oral Communication 1.2, 2.1, 2.1., 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6

Drama (University/College Prep) – A1.2, A2.2, B1.1, B2.1, B2.2, B2.3, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

OBJECTIVES

- To assist students in exploring how various social and economic pressures affect individuals living with gang presence in their community.

MATERIALS

Chalkboard and Chalk
OR
Chart Paper and Markers

Pre-Activity:

1. To the class, ask the question, “What are the reasons that Sam, Tyrone and Jesse decided to join a gang?” Get them to brainstorm a wide variety of responses. Write them down on the chart paper or chalkboard.
2. What are the most prevalent responses? As a group, narrow the reasons down to four of the most popular among the class via a vote by hands. It’s important to remind students that entrance into a gang is a complicated issue, and these four chosen reasons are just a few of a wide variety of reasons someone might choose (or be coerced) to join.

Part A:

- As a class, agree on one character from the performance in which will be used for this activity.
- Have a student be hot-seated by the class in the role of that character. The idea is for the class to create some background information along with a review of the character.

Hot-Seating is when someone, in character, sits in the middle of a semi-circle and they are questioned by others about their character. This is used to gain details and develop the character.

NOTE: To ensure safety within the classroom, the hot-seating must remain focused upon the character of the play and not evolve to be about the individual student. Teachers may want to be the one hot-seated or choose the student in order to avoid

possible bullying to occur. It also is important for students to accept what the character says while being hot-seated, otherwise the activity will not be effective.

Part B:

- Ask the students to choose the name of the topic they are most drawn to, from the four topics that were voted in by the class in the Pre-Activity portion.
- Each group, from the perspective of their topic, takes a few minutes to identify the issues that the character deals with.

Part C:

- Each group creates a short scene where they show the character engaging in a struggle involving their particular topic.
- Give the class a relatively short period of time (i.e.: ten minutes) to create their scenes, and encourage them to work on their feet as opposed to with pen and paper.
- The scene must identify the issue that the character is confronted with and show how the character moves towards a resolution.

Part D:

- Each group will present their scene to the whole class.

Part E: Group Discussion

- Were there any common themes amongst the groups?
- How are the four topics/issues intertwined?
- What effects (positive and negative) might they have on other characters in the play?
- Was the character successful in overcoming his obstacle? What could he have done differently?

Extension Activity:

- Drama 11 and 12 can be asked to further develop and refine their quickly-created scenes, and agree, as a class, how to string these scenes together to create a short play for presentation to a larger group.

ACTIVITY 3

Media Analysis

(Adapted from Project ACT Study Guide, 2010)

Subjects: English, Drama, Media Studies

Grades: 9-12 Time: 60 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English - Media Studies: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

Drama – C: 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

GRADE 10

English - Media Studies: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

Drama – A: 1.1, 1.3, 2.2; B: 2.2; C: 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

GRADE 11

English - Media Studies: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

Drama (Open) – A: 2.2, 3.1; B: 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3; C: 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3.

Media Studies – A: 1.3; B: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2; C: 1.1, 1.3; D: 1.1, 1.3

GRADE 12

English - Media Studies: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

Drama – C: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

OBJECTIVES

- To identify how Tyrone and Sam, in *D/SS*, may be influenced by media to take actions that have negative effects on their lives.
- To identify how social and cultural influences impact how we make choices about friends, school and family.
- To motivate students to think critically about the images presented to them in the media.
- Introduce to students how norms are socially constructed, particularly as they relate to peer pressure and “snitching”.

MATERIALS

Board
Chalk

Part A:

- Organize students into small groups.
- Discuss advertisements that students have seen in public and how they relate to gang life, youth gun violence, sexism (e.g. movies, music videos and clothing ads).
- Written on the board, ask students to consider the following questions:
 1. What did you see? Who or what was in this advertisement?
 2. What was this advertisement trying to sell?
 3. Who is the targeted audience?

4. What messages, images, or words did the advertisers use to convince people to be interested in the product they are selling?

Part B:

- Assign each group to replicate an advertisement that they have recently seen by creating a tableau of it.

Part C:

- Have groups present their tableau to the class.

Part D: Group Discussion

- Ask students to reflect on the common themes and images of the advertisements.
 1. What do these advertisements say to us?
 2. How might these advertisements influence how we make decisions in every day life (ie: our friends, how we treat people, how we talk, and what we wear?)

Extension Activity:

Have students return to their groups to create a television commercial that addresses one of the issues in *DISS* in a way that would help viewers make positive social, educational financial choices. Students should consider:

- Who is their audience?
- What is the message of their commercial?
- How will they make the commercial appealing to their audience?

ACTIVITY 4

Character Analysis: The Onion and the Iceberg

Subjects: English, Drama, Writer's Craft

Grades: 9-12 Time: 30-45 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English – Writing: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1-3.5

Drama – A1.1, A1.3, A2.2, C3.2, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 10

English – Writing: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1-3.5

Drama – A1.3, A2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 11

English – Writing: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1-2.4, 3.1-3.5

Drama (Open) – A1.3, A2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 12

English - Writing: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1-2.4, 3.1-3.5

Drama (Uni./College Prep) – A1.3, A3.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

Writer's Craft -Practicing Writing: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the external pressures (family, society, and friends) that affect the attitudes, actions and opinions of the character.

MATERIALS

Chart Paper
Markers

Part A:

- Assign five different areas of the classroom each of the following characters: Tracy, Sam, Jesse, Tyrone and Maizie. Ask the students to move towards the corner with the name of character they are most interested in. Once this is done, if one or more corners have more than 5 students in it, break the group down into smaller sub-sections.

Part B:

- Hand out a copy of the diagrams in Appendix C to each group. On large chart paper, have each group draw the Onion Diagram, and complete the diagram for their chosen character. In each labelled circle, write the thoughts, phrases, influences of each character.

Part C:

- Have each group draw the Iceberg Diagram on chart paper. Remind them that information written above “water line” is “factual”, information written under is “speculative”. The lower down on the paper, the more speculative the information is – this can include things the students want to know about the character.

Part D:

Drama: The diagrams can be used as a jumping off point for a Hot-Seat Activity, in which the smaller groups take turns being interviewed in the character they have chosen. (eg: Reporters are interviewing their character for a Human Interest story for the city newspaper; the students represent different sides of an argument as they hot-seat the character, who is trying to make an important decision.)

English/Writer's Craft:

A: Use the information discovered during the activity to write a journal entry from the perspective of their chosen character, about a scene from the play that the students find compelling.

B. Students are asked to re-write or create scenes or pieces of writing that deal with the external pressures faced by the protagonists in the play. Students can:

- 1) Re-write a scene from the play, which demonstrates a possible solution to the conflict that is presented.
- 2) Write "out-takes" of a scene which demonstrates a variety of different outcomes other than those presented in the play.

ACTIVITY 5

Sculpting Images – Snitching

Subjects: Health and Physical Education, Drama

Grades: 9-12

Time: 30 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

Drama – A1.1, A2.1, B2.2, B2.3, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

Health and Phys Ed – Healthy Living and Living Skills

GRADE 10

Drama – A1.1, A1.3, B2.2, B2.3, B3.1, B3.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 11

Drama – B2.2, B2.3, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

Healthy Active Living Education – Living Skills

GRADE 12

Drama (Uni./College Prep.)– B2.2, B2.3, B3.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

Healthy Active Living Education – Living Skills

OBJECTIVES

- To look at the concept of "snitching" from personal experiences as perceived by students in the class.
- To explore the power dynamics that arise from such situations.

MATERIALS

None

Part A:

- Begin by defining the word “snitch”.
Snitch: (From Oxford English Dictionary Online)
Verb: 1. steal, 2. inform on someone.
Noun: an informer.
- Discuss what other words can be used as synonyms for the word “snitch”. As a class, give examples of situations where snitching (and being convinced NOT to snitch) can happen. Be sure to look at situations when reporting to a teacher, parent or other authority figure had positive outcomes as well.

Part B:

- Divide the class into small groups of approximately 5 students per group.
- Within each group, each student in turn “sculpts” the others into a still image of snitching from their own experience (not scenes from TV or movies). The creator of the sculpture should focus on the events and feelings leading up to the conflict, as well as how it progressed.

Part C:

- Each student has two turns to create two different sculptures and the group chooses two of them to present to the class.

Group Discussion:

- How many sculptures portrayed images that could potentially have positive outcomes? How many of them portrayed potentially negative outcomes? What clues help us determine these judgements?
- How is the status of each character within each sculpture portrayed?
- Who has the most power in each of these sculptures?
- How does body language differ between the *Oppressor* and the *Oppressed* in these sculptures?
- How can snitching lead to conflict?
- How can we avoid conflict and still “do the right thing”?

ACTIVITY 6

Forum Replay

Subjects: English, Drama

Grades: 9-12

Time: 45 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English – Oral Communication: 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5; Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8; Writing: 1.2.

Drama – A1.1, A1.3, B1.2, B2.2, B3.2, C3.1, C3.3

GRADE 10

English – Oral Communication: 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5; Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8; Writing: 1.2.

Drama – A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, B1.2, B2.2, B2.3, B3.2, C3.1, C3.3

GRADE 11

English – Oral Communication: 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5; Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8; Writing: 1.2

Drama (Open) – A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, B2.2, B2.3, B3.2, C3.1, C3.3

GRADE 12

English – Oral Communication: 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5; Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8; Writing: 1.2

Drama (Uni./College Prep.) – A1.3, A3.2, B1.2, B2.1, B2.2, B2.3, B3.2, C3.1, C3.3

OBJECTIVES

- To provide an opportunity to analyse text, role-play with a script and improvise beyond it, while improving conflict-resolution skills.

MATERIALS

Enough copies of the scenes in Appendix B for each student
Paper and Writing Utensils

Part A:

- Hand out copies of the two scenes in Appendix B. Half of the class should have Scene One and the other half of the class should have Scene Two.
- The class should take a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the scene in front of them.

Part B:

- Ask each student to think of a character in their scene that they can identify most with. Remind them that this does not mean they have to have found themselves in a situation exactly like the one being depicted, but just that on some level they can relate to the character. For example, they may have responsibility for siblings or younger family members at home, so they may relate to Maizie's protectiveness of her children. Or they have felt peer-pressure not to "snitch" while at school or at home.

- Instruct the students to journal a few thoughts that come to mind at the moment in their given scene they could relate most to their chosen character.

Part C:

- Ask for volunteers from the class to play the characters in the two scenes. Each scene should have a separate set of actors.
- Play each scene out in front of the class once. Then ask the actors to reset to the beginning of the scene, this time allowing and encouraging the audience members to take the place of a character on stage when they see a way that they can solve a problem that is presented. An improvisation between the scripted actors and an audience member should follow, with the actors onstage responding as “truthfully” as they can in character.
- This part of the activity should follow the model set by Mixed Company as seen in the second part of their performance - the Forum. The teacher will take the role of the Joker, and guide the improvisations.

Part D: Group Discussion

- Once both scenes have been played out, discuss the outcome with the class. Pose the following questions:
 1. What happened in the Forum?
 2. What was your favourite part? What part didn't you like?
 3. Were the suggestions from the audience realistic?
 4. What happened when an unrealistic suggestion was given?
 5. What was it like for the scripted actors to have to improvise with the ideas of someone else?
 6. Were any real solutions found? Are there ways to use these solutions in everyday life?

ACTIVITY 7

In Their Words

Subjects: English, Drama, Writer's Craft

Grades: 9-12

Time: 60 Min

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

GRADE 9

English– Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8; Writing: 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

GRADE 10

English – Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8; Writing: 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Drama – A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 11

English – Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8; Writing: 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Drama (Open)– A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.2, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

GRADE 12

English – Reading and Literature Studies: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8; Writing: 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Drama (Uni./College Prep) – A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.1, A3.2, B2.1, C3.1, C3.2, C3.3

The Writer's Craft – Practising Writing: 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

OBJECTIVES

- To read and discuss real-life testimonials by current or former gang-members.
- To analyse text from the testimonials for the purpose of building on them to create fictional characters and a monologue or scene.

MATERIALS

Enough Copies of the Factsheet in 2.1B *In Their Words* for each student

Talking Stick

Paper and Writing Utensils

Diagrams from Appendix C

Part A

- Hand out the copies of the Information Factsheet to the students, and ask them to spend a few minutes reading them quietly to themselves.
- Reconvene the class in a circle, and using the Talking Stick, start a discussion using the following questions:
 1. What are your impressions of these quotations?
 2. Based on the words you read, are there things in common between the varied quotations and their speakers? What differs between them?
 3. What attitudes are shared by the different points of view?
 4. Is there anything that you feel is *not* being said in them?
 5. Think about each quotation as coming from a character you might see in a play or on television. Are there any points at which you feel that a specific character is not telling them truth, or only telling a part of it?
 6. How does the perspective of gangs by these people differ from the perspective of a victim of gang violence?

Part B:

- Ask the students to choose the quotation that they are most interested in or curious about. Then, using the Onion and the Iceberg Diagram in Appendix C,

get them to create a character sketch of the person behind their chosen monologue. See Activity 4 for more details about using the two diagrams.

- Remind them that they are using a quotation from a real, anonymous person as a jumping off point to create a fictionalized character.

Step 2:

Writer's Craft and English: Use these character sketches as a jumping-off point for the creation of a monologue or scene.

Drama: Put the students into smaller groups of 4 or 5. Instruct them to take turns putting one another in the Hot Seat until everyone has had a turn (see Activity 2 for details about the Hot Seat exercise). Then use these character sketches and the information and emotions discovered while Hot-Seated as a jumping off point for the creation of a monologue or scene to be presented to the class. Potential scenes can also be explored through improvisation between the newly-created characters.

B. Post-Show Survey

FOR STUDENTS:

This survey can also be completed confidentially online at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/P2HZ7Z3>

1. What school do you attend? _____

2. What grade are you in? _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. Did you feel the performance of DISS was: *(Circle all that apply)*

Realistic

Educational

Entertaining

5. What issues did you see in the play that happen/have happened in your school?

6. What other issues regarding youth violence do you see happening at your school?

7. Did you walk away from the performance with new information about how to deal with violence and gang issues?

FOR TEACHERS:

This survey can also be completed confidentially online at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PJWNWP3>

1. Did you feel the performance of *DISS* was: *(Check one)*
 - Very effective for everyone.
 - Very effective for many students.
 - Very effective for a few students.
 - Somewhat effective for many students.
 - Somewhat effective for a few students.
 - Not effective at all.

2. Was the presentation realistic/applicable to students? *(Circle one)*
 - Very realistic
 - Somewhat realistic
 - Some parts were realistic, but other not realistic at all
 - No, not realistic at all

3. What kind of feedback did you hear from students after the performance?
(Check one)
 - I heard positive feedback from students
 - I heard mixed feedback from students
 - I heard negative feedback from students
 - I did not hear any feedback

4. How likely would you be to recommend Mixed Company's presentations to another school? *(Check one)*
 - Very likely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Not likely at all
 - It would depend on the school

5. What was your favourite part of the Mixed Company presentation?

6. Is there any way we could improve our presentations and services?

7. Which of the following topics are relevant to your students? *(Please check all that apply)*

Bullying

Child Health/ParticipAction/Juvenile Diabetes

Environment

Homophobia

Sexual Assault

Other:

Cyber-bullying

Drugs, Alcohol and Peer Pressure

Gang Violence

HIV/STI Prevention

Sexual Harassment

9. Specific quotes are very useful in grant applications or letters to potential funders. Would you be willing to provide a quote, with your FULL FIRST NAME, INITIAL OF YOUR LAST NAME, your POSITION and your SCHOOL BOARD, along with permission for us to use your quote?

You are welcome to contact Mixed Company directly for further information in this regard, or email your quote to info@mixedcompanytheatre.com

10: Any Additional Comments?

APPENDIX A:

DISS: Scene by Scene Breakdown

Scene 1

Emjay sets the scene for the audience. He explains that more abstract representations will be used in place of fake guns during this performance. He also introduces himself and explains the back story of the characters we are about to meet. Maizie is Sam and Tracey's mother, just having moved them to the city from her sister's house. They have recently moved to Canada after trouble at home after her husband was killed. They are moving into a new apartment complex in a rough neighbourhood.

Scene 2

Tracey, Sam and Maizie arrive in their new apartment complex. The kids are not impressed with their new home. Maizie asks them to understand that they won't be here forever, if they all work hard and save for awhile. Tracey is worried about her new neighbourhood, but Sam and Maizie reassure her that she just needs to get used to it. It's also revealed that Sam and Tracey's dad was shot because of the people he associated with. This scene sets up the vulnerable position that Maizie, Sam and Tracy finds themselves in within their new community.

Scene 3

At school over lunch hour, Tyrone and Jesse are in the cafeteria, using inappropriate talk about girls to one-up each other. Jesse lends Tyrone money, who takes it and then approaches Tracey who is waiting in line for her lunch. He puts her down in front of the line up and when Sam sees this he comes to her rescue, which brings about a fight between him and Tyrone. When a teacher gets involved, Sam does the right thing by Jesse and Tyrone and says that they weren't fighting, just playing around. Jesse and Tyrone befriend Sam and his sister, and treat them to lunch. This scene explores the attitudes towards "snitching", as well as establishes Jesse's dominance over the other youth he surrounds himself with.

Scene 4

Sam, Jesse and Tyrone are outside a convenience store. Tyrone has stolen some merchandise from the store and brags about it. Jesse tried to get Sam to go back in and steal some more goods to sell the next day at school, but Sam has excuses as to why he can't do it. Jesse and Tyrone threaten to leave Sam behind and "deal with him later", so he decides to join them in returning to the store. They get caught and then threaten the owner if he ever calls the police on them. In this scene, we see the coercion of Sam into the group, veiled as an offer of friendship and protection.

Scene 5

In the park, a year later, and Tyrone is still hitting on Tracy. She is walking home from work and proceeds to shoot down his unwanted advances repeatedly. Jesse intervenes and tells Tyrone to get lost. When Tyrone leaves, Jesse tries to get Tracy to spend time with him by helping him with Math homework. Sam enters to overhear his offer and sends Tracy home. He accuses Jesse of hitting on his sister, to which Jesse responds that he was actually saving her from Tyrone. In this scene, we see evidence of the clear gender roles within this group of youth.

Scene 6

Back at the family's apartment, Maizie is overwhelmed by her bills. When Tracy arrives in the kitchen for breakfast, they discover that Sam hasn't come home from the previous evening. Tracy reluctantly reveals that she didn't see him at school the previous day either. When Sam returns home, he and Maizie fight about his change in behaviour which escalates to the point of him insulting the memory of his father. At this, Maizie tells him to pack his things and leave. Emjay lets us know that things have changed from this point forward.

Scene 7

Tracy crosses paths with Tyrone in the park. She is looking for Sam. Tyrone won't tell her where he is, but reveals that he has a gun and that the gang is planning something. Tracey exits quickly.

Scene 8

Outside the clothing store, Jesse is explaining to Sam and Tyrone his plan to steal as much from the store as possible. They enter and distract the salesperson one by one, while the others steal goods behind his back. Unexpectedly, Tracy enters the store and tries to get Sam to leave with her because Maizie has been upset since he left. The salesperson catches on to their shoplifting, and when he threatens to call the police, Tyrone pulls out his gun and demands that he open the cash register. In this scene the audience sees how quickly the violence escalates when a gun is suddenly involved in the action.

Scene 9

Tracy, Sam and Jesse are back at the family's apartment, when Tyrone arrives, high on adrenaline from his hold-up. Everyone else is unenthusiastic as Jesse comes up with their story for the police. Tracy exits to her room and the boys try to figure out what happens next. Tyrone thinks owning guns are the right course of action if they want to move up in their world, while Sam and Jesse disagree. Jesse and Tyrone have a conflict of words, which ends with Tyrone leaving, stating that he doesn't need

either of them. Tracey re-enter the room in time to see Jesse pull a gun out and hands it to Sam, asking him to "take care of... the fool". Jesse leaves as Maizie enters. Sam hugs his mother and leaves, saying there is something he has to take care of.

<i>Scene 10</i>

At the park, Tyrone is doling out the loot to other gang members and trying to build their aggression toward Jesse by bad-mouthing him. He is asking for their support to lead the group just as Jesse and Sam arrive. Jesse insults Tyrone and as he turns to walk away, Tyrone pulls out his gun. Sam responds in kind at the same time that Tracy suddenly appears. Shots are fired and Tracy falls to the ground.

APPENDIX B:
Two Script Samples

Script Sample 1

SCENE 2 THE APARTMENT

(The characters may be seen in the building climbing the stairs wearily and finally unlocking the door.)

MAIZIE

Why on the day we move in the elevator say "out of Service?" Tell me that.

SAM

What number is it?

MAIZIE

Five fourteen.

SAM

This is it.

TRACY

Like finally...

MAIZIE

None of your sass, Girl.... Tracy, don't just leave those bags - carry them in...Turn on the light, Sam.

SAM

Where's the light switch?

MAIZIE

Oh, Lordy - right by the door, somewhere - try the other side-

SAM

I've got it. There...

(Now they can see. SAM and TRACY are clearly startled by what they are looking at - and then dismayed.)

TRACY

This is it? This is our new home - you made it sound like a palace.

MAIZIE

It's not so bad -it's a good clean building - well maintained, MORE OR LESS.

TRACY

Even if the elevator is out of order.

MAIZIE

We got a lot to be thankful for.

TRACY

Mom, it's a dump! Why couldn't we stay where we were? I liked it with Auntie Lucy ...

SAM

Then why were you always whining...? "I can't have any privacy. I can't bring my friends over after school. This town is boring..."

TRACY

Shut up.

SAM

You shut up...

MAIZIE

Both of you, hush your mouths. Lucy was good to us when we first come to Canada but we couldn't stay in that little town for ever. Four years! Maybe here I can find a decent job - maybe the two of you can work after school...

SAM

I could be okay with that.

MAIZIE

... and one day we move to a real house. At least we are not out on the street. And I promised your daddy I'd keep you safe.

TRACY

Oh, yeah - real safe - did you take a look at those guys hanging out in the stairwell? I'm scared, Mom

SAM

Ain't nobody gonna lay a hand on my little sister - not while I'm around.

MAIZIE

That's right.

SAM

I promise.

MAIZIE

You two are like him, good youngsters, and strong, too. Don't be scared, Tracy. This is a big city. Things will be strange for a while. - but you'll get used to it.

SAM

You'll do fine, Trace.

MAIZIE

Now why don't we unpack our things. Find a pot, now. I'll make some soup and we can get to bed. We'll have to get up early - what with your first day at the new school and I have to get out there and look for work.

TRACY

Can I watch TV before I - what?

(She looks around her)

Oh. No TV set.

Script Sample 2

SCENE 3 SCHOOL CAFETERIA

JESSE

(To Tyrone)

Are you eating, or what?

TYRONE

Just checkin' out the new katties.

JESSE

The word is "Kyatties."

TYRONE

Yo, whatever. Do you see that? Mmmhmm. I'd hit that.

JESSE

Hit what? You can't even hit the ball in gym class.

TYRONE

Look who's talking, I wasn't the one who ran away when Ashley tried to kiss you in Grade 2.

JESSE

(Kisses his teeth) Likkle yute tings. You still on that? Da game changed now, where your game at?

TYRONE

Yeah, right. You wanna see a man in action?

JESSE

(Pretending to look around)

Where? I don't see no man in here.

TYRONE

Yo, Jesse, I'm talking about your man here. Just watch - I'll show you how I do.

JESSE

Well, show me.

(TYRONE starts towards the line -
and Tracy - but then turns back)

TYRONE

Uh, could I borrow -

JESSE

Borrow some cash?

TYRONE

- just enough for some fries and gravy or something. I'll pay you back.

JESSE

(Fishing out some cash)

It's alright. It's cool.

TYRONE

Thanks, Man. I'll pay it back.

(TYRONE goes to the cafeteria line
and pushes his way up to Tracy and
butts in)

Excuse me.

TRACY

Excuse you. I'm in line.

TYRONE

No, I was here.

TRACY

No, you weren't. You cut in.

TYRONE

I was here. Hey, Everybody - you saw me, right? I was here.

TRACY

(Trying to get in front of
him.)

What do you think you're doing?

TYRONE

What do you think you're doing?

TRACY

I was here.

TYRONE

No you weren't.

(They are tussling now)

TRACY

Get outa here.

TYRONE

(pushing her out of the line)

A'ight, you can stand behind me.

(Enter SAMMY)

SAMMY

Hey, what's going on here -

TYRONE

What's it to you?

SAMMY

This my sister - that's what.

TRACY

He pushed me out of line.

SAMMY

(to TYRONE)

You laid a hand on her?

TYRONE

What's it to you, you punk.

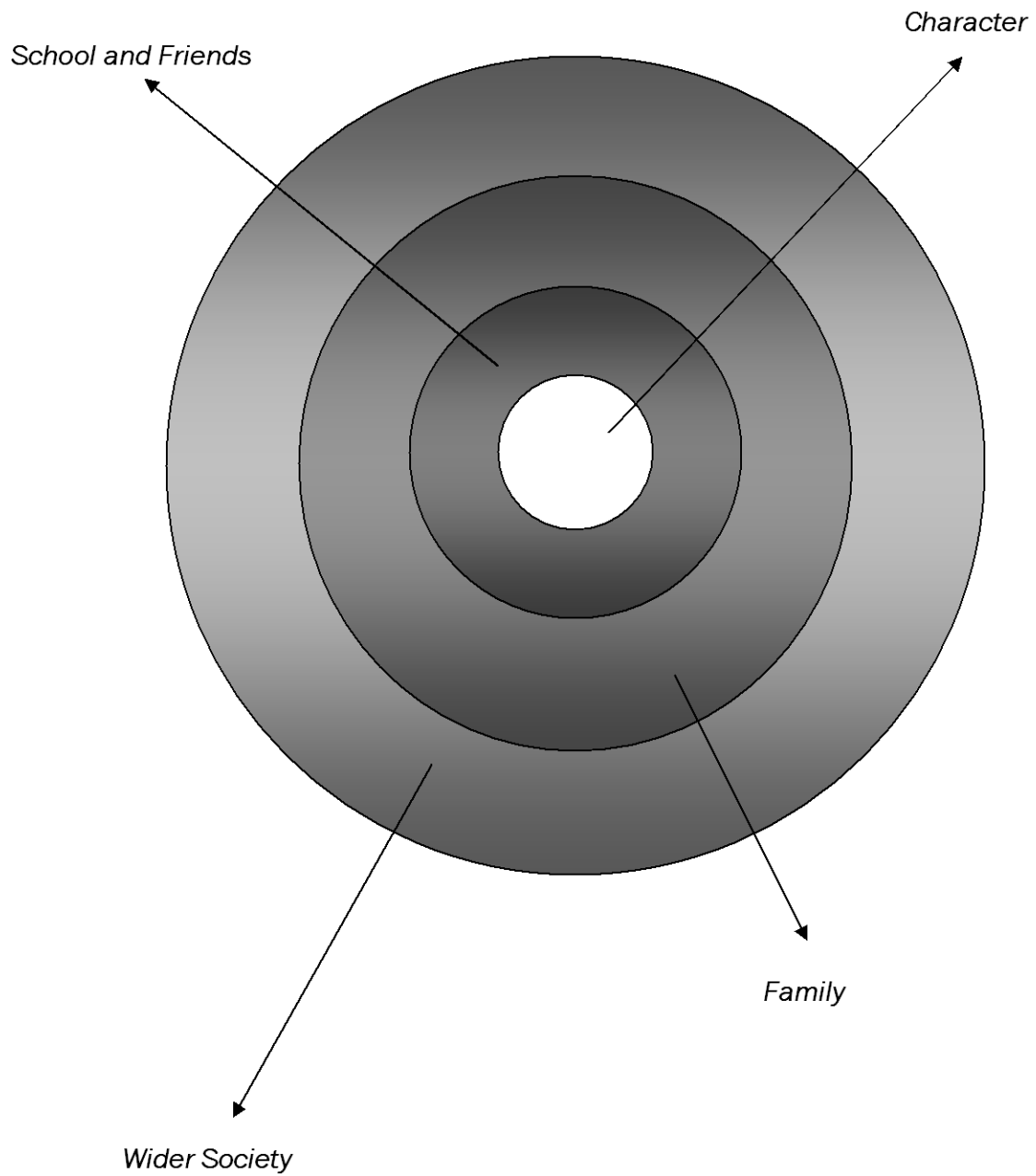
SAMMY

What did you call me?

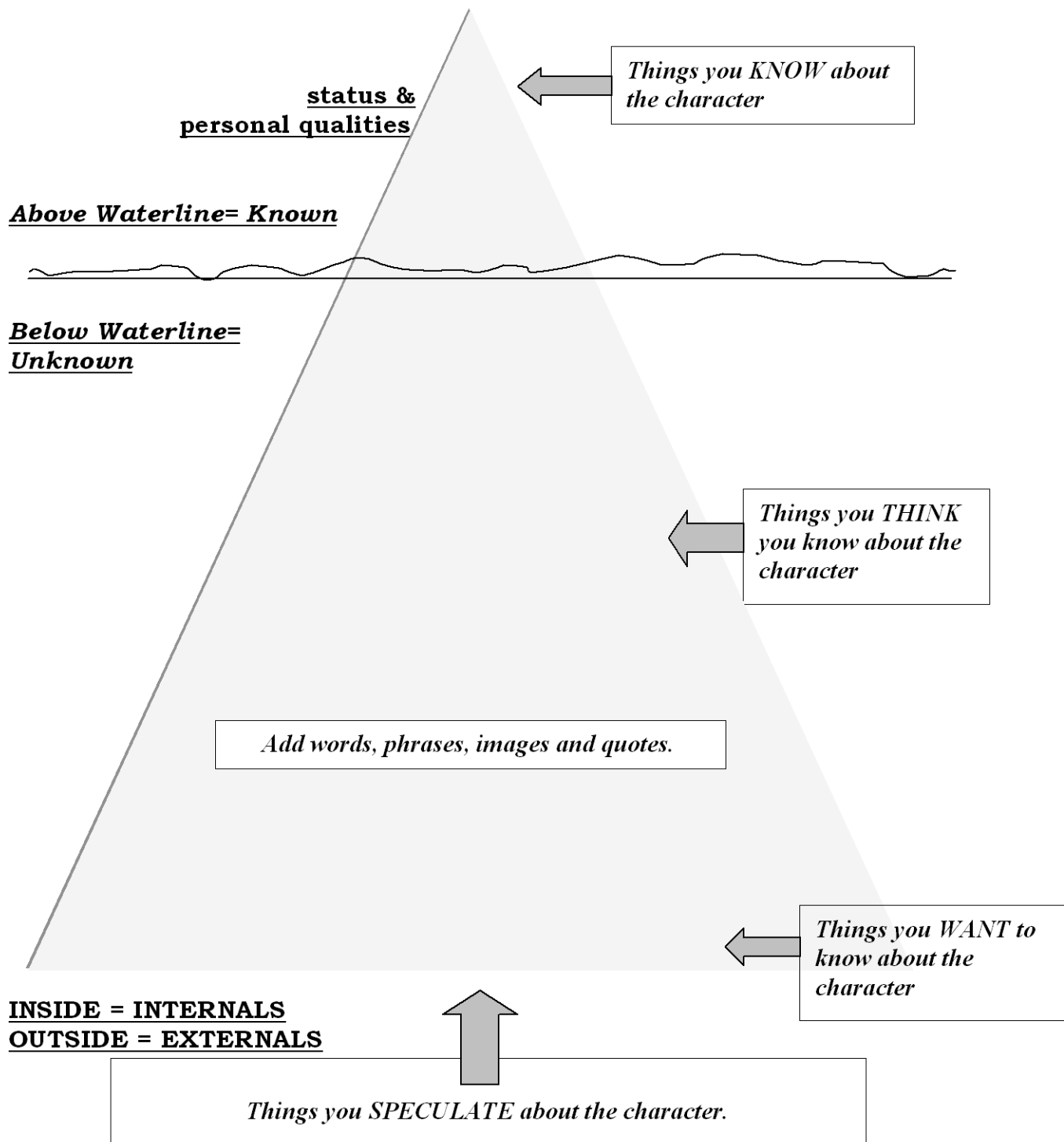
TYRONE

You heard me.

APPENDIX C:
The Onion Diagram
(Both diagrams taken from "Wishworld Teacher's Guide")



TIP OF THE ICEBERG: Character Exploration



Think about: character behaviours, reactions, likes, dislikes, relationships, profile, experiences, people that have shaped the character, things people say about the character, events in the character's life, etc.

APPENDIX D:

Helpful Resources and Organizations Handout

Gang Exiting Services			
Breaking the Cycle	(416) 745-1829	www.cantraining.org/BTC/btc.php	<i>Breaking the Cycle</i> is all about helping young people avoid getting involved in gangs or getting out of gangs if they are already involved.
Neighbourhood Basketball Association	1-877-360-JAMM (5266)	www.nbacanada.org	<i>Shoot the Right Shot</i> is an initiative designed to address youth violence and gang conflict by creating opportunities to teach youth how to co-exist with each other.
Health/Addiction Services			
CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)	1-800-463-6273 (toll free)	www.camh.net	Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, combining clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.
Toronto Public Health	(416) 338-7600	www.toronto.ca/health	TPH works in many ways to improve the overall health of the population and to overcome health inequalities - providing services to individuals and communities, and advocating for public policies that make our city healthier.
Crime/Violence Services			
Victim Services Program of Toronto	(416) 808-7066	www.victimservices.toronto.com	A non-profit charitable organization dedicated to helping victims of crime and/or sudden tragic circumstance.
CrimeStoppers	1-800-222-TIPS (8477)	www.222tips.com	Crime Stoppers is a partnership of the public, police and media which provides the community with a proactive Program to anonymously assist in solving crime and contributing to an improved quality of life
Multi-Service Organizations			
School Action Teams	(416) 808-7019	www.schoolactionteams.com	School Action Teams are a representation of the School Community, comprised of Students, School Staff, Parents and Police Officers. The goal of each team is to provide relevant campaigns that address the health safety of the school.
East Metro Youth Services	(416) 438-3697	www.emys.on.ca	A fully accredited multi-service mental health centre for youth 12-24 years of age and their families in East Toronto. Programs and services are organized into 5 areas: Counselling, Education Programs, Residential Services, Community Development, and Developmental Services.
Central Toronto Youth Services	(416) 924-2100	ctys.org	CTYS is a children's mental health centre on the forefront of serving youth. We give youth a chance to recreate their lives in an environment where they are challenged and empowered.
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868	kidshelpphone.ca	Kids Help Phone counsellors answer calls and online questions from across Canada. No matter what the problem or concern our counsellors are there to provide immediate and caring support, information and referrals to the kids who reach out to us.
211Toronto.ca		www.211toronto.ca	A directory of over 20,000 community, social, health, and government services.

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