

Years 9 - 12

17 - 20 May

random

by debbie tucker green



SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 



A. Introduction

These Teachers' Notes have been designed to assist you with classroom preparation and extension work in relation to the production of *random*. We hope that this resource will assist your students to further enjoy and enhance their performing arts experience back in the classroom. The activities are designed for students from Years 9 to 12.

The activities included in this resource provide opportunities for students to explore the broad themes and style of the performance. The NSW Board of Studies syllabi have been used as guides for the planning of these activities. You should consider adapting and rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school.

Some websites are suggested throughout this resource. It is recommended that you first visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school environment before setting the activities based on these.

B. Classroom Context and Curriculum Links

While the media often reports on violence in marginalised communities, it rarely captures the devastating impact on those directly affected, particularly families. Written in verse and performed by one actor, *random* simply but powerfully expresses the tragedy of how one family becomes the victim of senseless crime.

For teachers of English, PDHPE and Drama this performance will be especially beneficial as it provides many opportunities for classroom discussion, activities and extension work. Some areas for work back in the classroom include: text and interpretation; solo performance and acting skills; and exploration of themes concerning youth culture, family relationships, and the repercussions of crime and violence.

Drama: Elements of Drama (Role and Character, Tension, Rhythm, Language).

HSC Drama Students: Individual Project (Performance).

English: Language Forms and Features (Poetry); Text (Spoken Text); Close Study of Text (Poetry).

PDHPE: Self and Relationships (Discrimination, Harassment and Vilification; Strengthening Resilience).



C. Performance Event Description and Synopsis

random is a powerful and moving play that explores the consequences of random acts of violence. Written by acclaimed English playwright, debbie tucker green, *random* is a pertinent reminder that we cannot accept the far too frequent and senseless waste of young life due to crimes of violence. Set in South London and written in verse using patois, a form of English-Jamaican slang, *random* captures one family's day in an hour long performance. The play effectively shifts time and place moving from home, to school, to the classroom, back to home and so on. Told largely from the perspective of the daughter, it is easy to slip into this family's world. The cadence and engaging rhythms of the text convey an appealing urban rawness. The aural imagery is particularly evocative capturing the nuances and tangible feel of home, street and school.

What makes the performance of *random* especially engaging is the fact that it is performed by one black woman. The casting is deliberate and important as it encourages an examination of layers of meaning related to issues of class, race and gender - a rich area for discussion with senior students.

The use of transformational acting allows for an engaging and sometimes humorous use of physicality as the performer shifts roles from mother to daughter, daughter to brother, brother to father, father to teacher and so on.

While the play is clearly about a specific marginalised community, this does not limit its appeal. The characters, their concerns and the core issues of this play create echoes of meaning for any audience and arouse empathy.

Caution: This production contains some coarse language and confronting themes.

Activity One: debbie tucker green

Curriculum Links: Drama/English

1.1 The following link is a promotional clip of *random* on YouTube. While this clip provides little information about the play, it captures something of the mood and style of the production.

YouTube - Royal Court Theatre *random* Promotion
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkWYU42oXWw>


1. What are some adjectives that describe the mood and feel of the performance as suggested by the music and use of text in the promotional clip on YouTube?
2. From the information you have seen on the web links, do you think this play is set in Australia and is about Australian characters? If you don't think so, explain why not? Refer to examples from the clip to support your explanation.
3. Are there any words in the YouTube clip that are unfamiliar or that you do not recognise? What do you think these words might mean?

1.2 The following links provide information about the playwright, debbie tucker green and the play *random*. Students could visit each site and respond to the questions and complete the tasks provided:

Royal Court Theatre - Podcast *random*
http://royalcourttheatre.libsyn.com/index.php?post_id=303595

The Independent on Sunday - Interview with debbie tucker reen
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/debbie-tucker-green-if-you-hate-the-show-at-least-you-have-passion-596009.html>

1. Define the meaning of the word 'patois'. Explain how this term might be relevant to the play *random*.
2. What other information can you find about the people debbie tucker green portrays in *random*?
3. What is life like for this particular group of people living in South London?
4. What other plays has debbie tucker green written and what are they about?
5. What praise do reviewers have of tucker green's work?



**Activity One: debbie
tucker green**
(continued)

6. How is the style of dialogue in tucker green's plays different to the dialogue of plays written in a realistic style?
7. Who does tucker green say are her influences?
8. What sort of music do you think might accompany this play?
9. Bring in a soundtrack that you think might say something about the issues in the play or that might suit the context and situation of the play. Play your track for the class and explain why you chose it.

Activity Two: Researching Youth and Crime

Curriculum Links: Drama/English/PDHPE

2.1 One of the themes in *Random* is how acts of violence impact on people and communities. The following media report addresses an increase in youth crime in NSW. While this article was written in 2006, It expresses an opinion about youth and crime that is still prevalent in the media today. Students can choose to read the report online or act out the report by adopting the voices of the various experts and reporters.

ABC PM Youth Crime on The Rise

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2006/s1564620.htm>

The following questions can be completed after reading the media transcript.

1. What is the central issue in this media report?
2. What evidence is there that youth crime in NSW is on the rise?
3. What are the possible reasons for this increase?
4. Why are more young women involved in youth crime?
5. Why is Dr Makkai worried about drawing conclusions from any statistics on youth crime?

2.2 Ask students to visit the following website and complete the tasks that follow:

Justice Action Australia

http://www.justiceaction.org.au/index.php?Itemid=165&id=165&option=com_content&task=view

1. Visit the site's home page. Who are the people behind Justice Action Australia and what is their aim?
2. Who are the most likely victims of crime?
3. What are the misconceptions about youth crime?
4. Visit the Crime page of the web site. What information can you find about the nature of crime in our society? What is Justice Action's argument about the definition and perception of crime?
5. Read the link on the crime page to Victims of Crime Fact Sheet. What points are being made here?



Activity Two: Researching Youth and Crime

6. Visit other pages at this website and note any information you feel is interesting or important.

Ask the class to work in small groups. Each group is to prepare a short oral presentation to the class on the issues concerning victims of crime. The following websites can be used to research the oral presentation topic:

Don't Suffer in Silence Enough is Enough Blog

<http://enoughisenoughau.blogspot.com/2010/03/some-tips-for-teenagers-dealing-with.html>

Victims of Crime - Enough is Enough

<http://www.enoughisenough.org.au/victims/>

Victim Support Service Inc.

<http://www.victimsa.org/>

The Ripple Effect of Crime -David Kerr - Victim Support Service SA

<http://www.victimsa.org/files/articles-and-presentations/the-ripple-effect-of-crime.pdf>

Activity Three: Risk Taking (continued)

Curriculum Links: Drama/English/PDHPE

3.1 *Random* does not stereotype youth behavior but alludes to how young people in South London interact and spend their time out of school and away from their families. This activity relates to the themes of the play by exploring how risk taking behavior can be both exciting and potentially dangerous.

Ask students to work in pairs. Each pair is to create a moving image with sound, of each of the following situations:

- Two friends daring each other to jump from a cliff edge into the ocean
- Two friends daring each other to shop lift from a store
- Two friends daring each other to perform a dangerous skate board trick
- Two friends in a car and one dares the other to drive faster
- Two friends picking a fight with an opposing gang.

When you have finished these activities, ask each pair to discuss the feelings that people experience when involved in risky behaviour.

As a class, discuss why risky behaviour is appealing and exciting and share any personal stories of experiences where risk taking was either without consequences or that led to negative consequences.

3.2 In this activity your students will practice some movement work with a focus on the drama skill of slow motion. Ask your students to find a place to work individually. Ask the class to walk through the space without interacting with each other. Ask them to be very conscious of their movement including the way their arms are moving and the placement of their feet. After a short time, ask the class to halve the speed of their walk but without losing any of the form or energy of their normal walk. Ask your students to halve the speed of their walk again. Continue halving the speed until your students are moving in slow motion. Emphasise the importance of using muscle control to make the movements convincing. Repeat this activity but this time ask your students to begin by jogging through the space. They will need to be conscious of their body posture, use of hands and arms and the placement of steps to effectively create a slow motion version of their jogging movement.



Activity Three: Risk Taking (continued)

3.3 Instruct the class to perform a mimed activity that is of a task that requires some physical exertion, for example moving something heavy, cleaning windows etc. You will also need to instruct your students to use their imaginations to see the environment in which they are performing this activity to enhance the belief in their acting. Now ask your students to repeat the activity but at half the speed. As the students work, instruct them to halve the speed of their actions until they are moving in slow motion. Ask for individual volunteers and provide feedback on the effective use of facial expression, movement and control to create slow motion movement.

3.4 Divide the class into groups of three. Each group is to prepare a short role play that uses movement and dialogue to show a group of young people having fun but in a way that might be perceived as risk taking or dangerous. Each group is to decide on the location and activity that the characters are involved in. Slow motion is to be used to highlight the moment of greatest danger for one or more of the characters in the role play. Allow the groups time to prepare and then ask them to present their work to the class.

Activity Four: Performance Reflection

Curriculum Links: English/Drama

4.1 Ask students to read the following reviews of *Random*. Encourage them to reflect on each review by answering the following questions:

Random Reviews:

British Theatre Guide Review - Random

<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/random-rev.htm>

Black Theatre Review - Random

<http://www.catchavibe.co.uk/theatre-review-random-debbie-tucker-gree/9762/>

1. What was the general impression of the performance given in the review?
2. What did the review identify as the highlights of the performance?
3. What criticisms did the reviewers convey?
4. How do the opinions of the reviewers match with your impressions of the performance?

4.2 The following questions can be used as a guideline for a discussion or written review of the performance.

1. What are your initial responses to the performance? Often using a rating out of ten or twenty helps you to find where your initial reaction sits. By answering the rest of the questions you will be able to identify specifically the strengths and weaknesses of the performance.
2. Briefly summarise the narrative journey or plot of the performance.
3. What were the key issues and themes?
4. How effectively were the themes and issues addressed? Describe one example from the performance where you felt a theme or issue was communicated powerfully. What dramatic strategies were used to convey this?
5. Describe the overall look of the production. How did this directorial/design contribute to your enjoyment of the performance?
6. What sounds/music or multi-media was used in the performance? How effective were these choices? Describe and explain one example of an effective choice from the performance.



Activity Four: Performance Reflection (continued)

7. Evaluate the acting in the performance. In your evaluation, provide description of moments from the performance to illustrate your opinion/judgment:

- How convincing was the performer in the creation of the various characters/roles? Were some more convincing than others?
- How strong/consistent was the performer's use of focus and energy?
- Evaluate the performer's use of the expressive skills of voice and/or movement.

8. What criticisms do you have of the performance? What suggestions can you make to improve the performance in areas where you felt there was a weakness?

Activity Five: My Morning

Curriculum Links: English/Drama

5.1 In this task your students will devise their own short individual performance. Students are to work individually, using the opening sequence from *Random* provided below. After a few readings ask students to stand and find somewhere in the space where they can work individually. Encourage walking and moving as they read the extract out loud so they can physicalize rhythms and beats.


Part One

Sister ...And the su'un in the air-
in the room-
in the day-
like the
shadow of a shadow feelin...
off-key-I...
look the clock. Eyeball it.
It looks me back.
Stare the shit down-
it stares me right back.

(beat)

...Til it blinked first-loser.
Then changes its time...7.37.
Am.

So I-
give it my back-
roll on my front -
flex under the duvet
and lie there on the reluctant to get up-
a rubbish nights sleep
a restless nights sleep
for no reason at all.



Activity Five: My Morning (continued)

Birds bitchin their bird song outside.
people already on the road.
dogs in their yards barking the shit outta
the neighbourhood.

This ent a morning to be peaceful
and the something in the air-
in this room-
in this day-
mekin me shiver
even tho my single duvet
is holdin onto me like my man-
who still don't phone-
should be.

Random Debbie Tucker Green - Nick Hern Books


5.2 Form groups of four or five students. Each group is to prepare a short movement and reading performance of the extract. Encourage the groups to use space imaginatively to represent the location as well as the mood and atmosphere. Group members can use synchronized movement as well as individual movements if they wish. All group members are required to represent the one character so the personality conveyed through the delivery of the lines, body language, movements and gesture must be consistent. Preparation for this performance will take a minimum of twenty minutes. Once the groups have finished rehearsing, view each group's performance. Ask the class to peer assess the performance work. They might use the following questions as a guide:

- What were the two strongest moments in the group's presentation? Why?
- What do you wish the group had done to make their presentation stronger? How would this change have improved the performance?

5.3 As preparation for the next activity you might like to read your students some of the work of Jill Scott, one of Debbie Tucker Green's inspirations or play some of Jill Scott's music where the lyrics convey a narrative:

<http://us.macmillan.com/author/jillscott>

Ask students to share the music of Hip Hop and R&B artists they like where the rap or lyrics recount an event or tell a narrative.



Activity Five: My Morning (continued)

5.4 Students are to create their own two minute verse performance. This will require significant preparation time. Ask students to work with a partner who can provide advice and feedback during the development of the performance. The requirements of the performance are:

- The performance must capture one aspect of an event or moment that the performer has recently experienced as part of their morning preparations before school.
- As the performer recounts the event or moment, they are to use physical movement and mime to illustrate the actions.
- The performer may also play a rhythmic music track (no lyrics) to accompany their performance.

The following questions can be used as guidelines for feedback for students during rehearsal and preparation:

1. What images, objects, sounds, atmosphere will you describe in your performance?
2. What is the beginning/middle/end of your performance?
3. What is the climactic moment of your performance?
4. How can you use language techniques like simile, metaphor, assonance, alliteration, repetition, slang, pause etc to create the right mood and message for your performance?
5. How can you use body movement and gesture to show how you feel, the location and any other aspects of the environment?
6. How can you use your voice to engage the audience?
7. What kind of relationship do you want to establish with the audience when speaking to them directly and why? How will you achieve this?
8. Is there any music/sound you need to play during the performance? How will this music/sound change mood/atmosphere?

Activity Six: Family Relationships

Curriculum Links: Drama/ English

6.1 In the play *Random*, the performer plays all the characters but we don't see these characters together. This activity extends on the information provided in the play to use physical movement and voice to represent the relationships between the family members and moments from the play. Ask your students to work with a partner. Ask each pair to discuss the relationships between the characters using evidence from the play.

6.2 Ask the class to sit in a circle on the floor. Explain that you will call out character combinations and moments from the play and volunteers will use physical movement and body shape to represent the characters and moments. The situations are:

- Sister and brother in the morning
- Brother with mates on the way to school
- Sister with mother at breakfast
- Mother waking father
- Sister with friend who gossips
- Brother with teacher - he is late
- Brother with mother - she wants him to wear his school uniform properly
- Mother with father - she asks `are you sure it was him?`
- Daughter with father - they identify the body

A volunteer begins the activity by moving into the centre of the circle and taking up a frozen shape as one of the two characters in the scene. A second student comes into the circle and finds a way of complementing the shape of the first person to communicate the moment between the two characters. This exercise continues until each person in the class has participated.

6.3 Ask the class to work in pairs. This activity will require one or two lessons for preparation. Each pair is to create a short movement performance that explores the relationship between two characters. The movement should focus on one specific moment of dramatic action. The movement may show either negative or positive aspects of the relationship. The pair may also add lines of dialogue to help capture the essence of the dramatic moment. The dialogue should be minimal and devised rather than copied from the performance. Allow the pairs time to prepare and then present their work to the class.

Activity Seven: Developing Resilience

Curriculum Links: English/Drama/PDHPE

7.1 In this activity your students will research the challenges that face young people and the resources and advice that suggest how best to deal with these pressures. The information from this research will be used as the basis for either a drama role play or as a written piece for English.

Ask your students to visit the following websites and complete the related tasks:

- Identify two issues for young people today.
- What impact might these issues have on young people in terms of their feelings and sense of well being?
- How might you deal with these situations?
- What advice can you find that helps young people cope with these issues?

Health Insite

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Survival_Skills_for_Young_People

Men's Line Australia

<http://www.menslineaus.org.au/Youth/Default.aspx>

TAC - Young People and Risk Taking

<http://www.tacsafety.com.au/jsp/content/NavigationController.do?areaID=13&tierID=2&navID=5CF5918F7F000001008BD6860747371E&navLink=null&pageID=345>

References

British Theatre Guide Review - Random

<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/random-rev.htm>

Black Theatre Review - Random

<http://www.catchavibe.co.uk/theatre-review-random-debbie-tucker-gree/9762/>

Health Insite

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Survival_Skills_for_Young_People

Men's Line Australia

<http://www.menslineaus.org.au/Youth/Default.aspx>

TAC - Young People and Risk Taking

<http://www.tacsafety.com.au/jsp/content/NavigationController.do?>

[areaID=13&tierID=2&navID=5CF5918F7F00001008BD6860747371E&navLink=null&pageID=345](http://www.tacsafety.com.au/jsp/content/NavigationController.do?areaID=13&tierID=2&navID=5CF5918F7F00001008BD6860747371E&navLink=null&pageID=345)

Youtube -Royal Court Theatre Random Promotion

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkWYU42oXWw>