

## Warm-up exercises

Using effective warm-up exercises will help your voice, body and mind make the most of every rehearsal and performance.

### PHYSICAL WARM-UP

#### 1 Find 'neutral position'

Neutral position is standing without holding any unnecessary tension in your body, so your body doesn't suggest any particular emotion. Finding neutral position helps you to build your character effectively, as your body language will be made up from character choices and not your own physical habits.

#### TIP

Keep your eyeline on something straight ahead throughout the warm-up.

#### TIP

Throughout your warm-up, try to use only the muscles you are focusing on at that time. For example, keep your head and neck relaxed and still while stretching your arms.

#### TIP

Be clear in your mind what colour the paint on the end of your nose is. The clearer you see it, the better you will do the movement.

#### 2 Stand with your feet hip-distance apart

Starting with your feet, consciously relax every muscle in your lower body that you don't need to keep you upright, then work up through your body to the top of your head and down each arm.

#### 3 Arms

Rotate your hands. Work the rotation through your wrists, then arms and finally shoulders, so you are 'windmilling' your arms in one direction. Then 'windmill' your arms in the opposite direction.

#### 4 Head and neck

Imagine a blob of paint on the end of your nose. Slowly paint a straight line slowly across your field of vision, from one side to the other, using only your head and neck.

#### 5 Shoulders

Roll your shoulders in a circle. Ensure that each circle goes as far back, up, forwards and down as you can. Then reverse the circle.

## 6 Torso and waist

Now bring that rolling stretch from your shoulders into your torso, in whatever direction you like. Continue the rolling stretch down to your waist, in both directions.

### TIP

**Don't be afraid to look silly!**

The more comfortable you are using the whole of your body and your voice in the warm-up, the easier you will find anything you need to do onstage.

## 7 Legs

Move the stretch down to your legs, in any direction you like. Lift one leg and shake it. Make sure your eyes focus on the middle-distance. Now do the same with the other leg.

### TIP

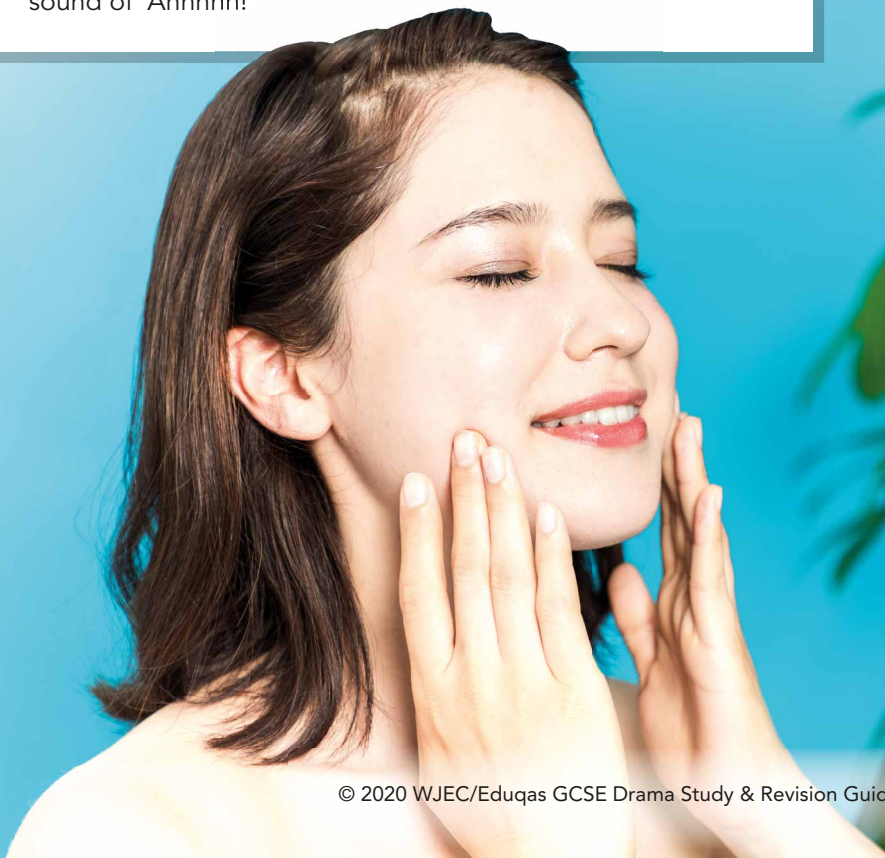
As well as your physical focus (eyes on something straight ahead of you), try to keep a mental focus. It could be what your character is thinking about in their first **monologue**, your backstory, your **objective** ... Every movement and sound you make during the warm-up will be more comfortable with a mental and physical focus.

## 8 Face

Gently massage all the muscles in your face and under your chin, then massage your shoulders slightly harder.

## 9 Whole body

Now shake your whole body, with your throat open on a voiced sound of 'Ahhhhh!'



# VOCAL WARM-UP

## 1 Raspberry chewing gum

Blow a long raspberry, with a hand gesture as if stretching gum from your mouth. If the note goes up, point the gum up. If the note goes down, point it down. Try different lengths and sounds.

### TIP

Think about what your character means for each of your lines and try to get that message across with your vocal tone, diction and facial expression. Experiment with how your face and voice communicate your meaning, even when speaking gibberish.

## 2 Paintball consonants

With your eyeline straight ahead and a finger on your diaphragm, breathe in then 'shoot' a consonant at the opposite wall as if it is a paintball.

Try these, one at a time:

- Hey
- He
- Ha
- Ho.

Now try a line of these, on one breath:

- Tar Tay Tee Tor Too.

Then try these sound pairs – repeat these sounds as pairs, throwing them like paintballs:

- SS SS, ZZ ZZ, Shh Shh, K K, Wh Wh.

### TIP

Flexible vocal tone and diction will often be the difference between a successful line and an unsuccessful line. See what happens if you try to say the 'One-one was a racehorse' tongue-twister (below) in monotone – it would lack meaning for the audience.

## 3 Standing snores

Keeping your eyeline at middle-distance, breathe in and release the breath on a long vowel. Then breathe in again and release it on another:

- Ahh
- Ooh
- Ohh.

Now try the same with the vowels of these words:

- Hey
- Ho
- Ha
- He
- Yes
- No.

## 4 Vocal flexibility

Try these tongue-twisters:

“Copper-bottomed coffee pot.”

“In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire,  
hurricanes hardly ever happen.”

“Whether the weather is cold, whether the weather  
is hot, we'll weather the weather whatever the  
weather, whether we like it or not.”

“One-one was a racehorse, Two-  
two was one too, One-one won  
one race, Two-two won one too.”

# Devising with dramatic devices

## ACTIVITY 1.3

AO 1 AO 2

Pick one of the following options to use as your stimulus for a devised scene. What themes, events or characters does it make you think of? Those ideas are the beginning of devising theatre.

Discuss ideas with your group and use up to three dramatic devices from the mind map on page 16 to create a 5-minute scene.

Ready, set, devise!



**'Learning to Fly' – Pink Floyd**

**'Last chance'**

*'Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.'*  
– Confucius

I picked the picture of the trees and crows. I want to talk about how humans treat nature. I think the central character might be someone from a town who comes to live in the country ...

## ACTIVITY 1.4

AO 1 AO 2

To practise using a song as a stimulus, discuss as a group a song you all know and would like to explore as a scene.

### TIP

You don't need to be musical to turn a song you love into theatre. You could even explore the characters and plot you think the song describes and use no music at all.

## FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

You can include your material from Activity 1.3 in your portfolio – or, use the same activity on the stimulus material your teacher offers and include that.



## ACTIVITY 1.5

**AO1** **AO2**

Look at the two images below. What story do they in conjure up in your imagination?

Discuss your ideas with your group and develop your own scene.

If you are stuck for inspiration, add one of these two 'atmospheres' to help progress your ideas:

- 1 *Nostalgic* – looking back to childhood.
- 2 *Ghostly* – is someone haunted by a memory or an actual ghost?



The old teddy bear made me think of someone looking back at their childhood memories, some time ago. I might even devise a ghost story about the teddy bear's owner ...

### FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

Which was your favourite dramatic device to use? Why did you choose it to help you work with your piece of stimulus? Try drawing or photographing the dramatic device as well as explaining why it was particularly helpful in developing your scene.

# GAMES FOR DEVISING

AO 1

AO 2

These games will help you to explore the skills of devising drama. You will come up with lines and use your body and voice to illustrate emotions and ideas. Work together as a group, accepting the ideas of others and offering your own.

1

## “What’s this?”

**A quick-fire game to get ideas and imagination warmed up.**

- 1 This can be done with any object, for example a pencil.
- 2 The director (either your teacher or one member of your group) holds up the pencil and asks everyone to observe it closely.
- 3 Then, the director asks every member of the group, quickly and urgently, ‘What’s this?’
- 4 Each member of the group must say something true about the object, for example ‘It’s pink’, ‘It’s got an eraser on the end’, ‘It’s got a sharp point’.
- 5 Next, when the director asks ‘What’s this?’ each member of the group must instantly reply with a lie. You can say anything, so long as it is not true, for example ‘It’s a flamingo!’, ‘It’s a jet engine!’, ‘It’s brown!’

This game is all about **spontaneity** – any hesitation and you are out.

**How does this help me to devise?** This game stops you from overthinking and gets you in the habit of responding authentically and with confidence onstage.



### TIP

This game uses Stanislavski’s techniques of observation and spontaneity.

2

## “Yuck ball”

**A great warm-up for Physical Theatre and voice work.**

- 1 Form a circle. One person in the group is the director. Begin by throwing a mimed ball around the circle.
- 2 When the ball gets back to the director, they will ask you to throw something disgusting at the imaginary ball in their hands. You can mime flicking snot, throwing dog poo, whatever you can think of!
- 3 With every bit of snot/slime/dog poo that lands, the mimed ball gets bigger and smellier. You can’t drop it. You have to catch it from the person on one side of you and throw it to the person on the other side and you can’t talk – all you can say is ‘Uuurrrgh!’ or ‘Yuck!’

**How does this help me to devise?** It makes sure that your body, voice and emotions are working together. It helps you to convey emotions, gestures and tones of voice, so you can ‘show, not tell’ your audience what your character is feeling and what your scene is about. Because the Yuck ball is invisible, you can only keep its reality for the audience by eye contact and **observation** – keeping it the same shape, etc. as when it was thrown.



### FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

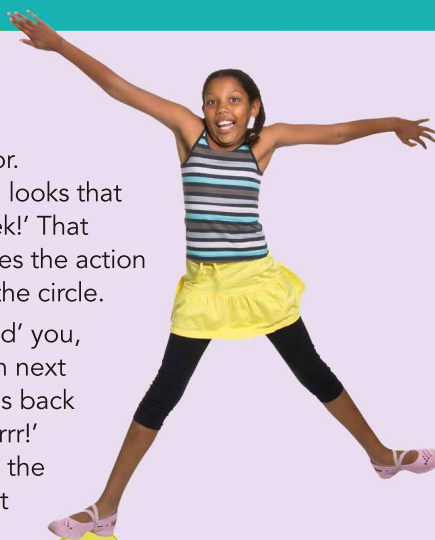
Draw an image or describe an idea that came up in one of these games that you could use or develop in your group scene.

## 3

**“Eek! Grr! Aagh!”****A sound-effects and Physical Theatre storytelling game.**

- 1 Form a circle. One member of the group should be the director. The director turns to the student next to them in the circle and looks that person in the eye, while performing a star jump and saying ‘Eek!’ That student turns to the person next to them in the circle and copies the action and sound. Repeat, so the ‘Eek!’ and action is passed around the circle.
- 2 You can change direction by turning on the person who ‘Eeked’ you, holding up your hands like claws and saying ‘Grrr!’ The person next to you should copy the sound and gesture so the ‘Grrr!’ travels back the way the ‘Eek!’ has come, until someone challenges the ‘Grrr!’ by going back to the ‘Eek!’ You can also throw a sound across the circle, by pointing both arms at the person you want to send it to and saying ‘Aagh!’ (with fear, as if you are seeing a ghost).
- 3 Anyone who hesitates is out and sits down in their place in the circle. The more people are out, the more the remaining players have to concentrate.

**How does this help me to devise?** Words are just the surface of a scene. However good the dialogue, what reaches the audience most is how truthful the emotion (shown by your face and voice) is. Any sound – or sound-effect – can be made meaningful.

**TIP**

Try replacing the suggested sounds with ones from ideas of your own, or with individual words, to instantly build a devised text scene.

## 4

**“Pickled onions”****A gibberish game to boost your mime and voice skills.**

- 1 Stand in a circle, with a large acting space in the middle.
- 2 Two actors volunteer to go into this ‘improvisation circle’.
- 3 One actor makes an ‘offer’ of an idea to begin a scene. For example, Actor 1 might be a child begging an adult to let them go to a party or they might be an adult teaching a child how to cross the road. The clearer and more specific the physical actions, tone of voice and idea in your head, the easier to show in performance.
- 4 BUT ... the only words you can say are ‘pickled onions’! Every word must be replaced by this phrase. All the meaning must come from tone of voice, physical movement and facial expression.

**TIP**

Even a sound like a sigh, a cough or a scream should be the phrase ‘pickled onions’ for the audience to believe in the scene.

**TIP**

Remember, in every drama scene that includes more than one actor, ‘offers’ are being made and accepted all the time.

**How does this help me to devise?**

It encourages you to express your meaning in ways other than words, so that when you say lines you fully inhabit them and bring their meaning to life.

**FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO**

You could use one of these games to develop your scene. If you do this, explain how you have used it, and perhaps take a video of it (you can recreate key moments after the game). This could then be included in your portfolio of evidence.





Here is a mind map of questions for a performer to ask themselves about their scene, followed by similar questions for the designer.

## Performer's mind map



### TIP

It helps to know what is important for both actors and designers – make sure that you know your way around both these mind maps.

## Designer's mind map



### TIP

'Audition' different effects around the same idea: just as you can change a gobo for a different effect, you will be able to find different versions of similar sounds – from the squeal of brakes to a scream of fear or joy.



# Checklists to help you plan your design

## Lighting design

- ☐ What colours could suggest your theme?
- ☐ Do you want the lighting to suggest a particular time of day, season or type of weather?
- ☐ What gobos, or other special effects, do you need?
- ☐ What areas of the stage or characters do you need to draw attention to?
- ☐ What angles do you want to use for your lighting?

## Sound design

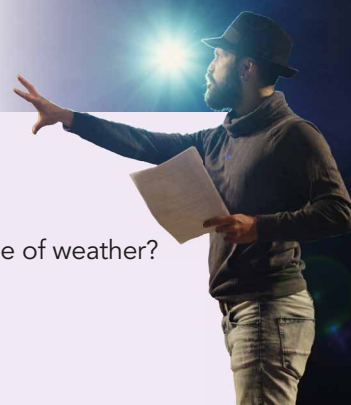
- ☐ How can you use music to suggest your theme?
- ☐ What sound-effects might help suspense, location, etc.?
- ☐ What live sounds or recorded sounds might you use in the performance?
- ☐ How might you use volume, either in recorded music or live sound, to affect mood or communicate messages?
- ☐ How can you use reverb/echo to create a sense of memory or time passing?
- ☐ Where will you position your sound sources on the stage? How will this make the best use of amplification without drowning out the action?

## Set design (including props)

- ☐ What stage configuration will you use? (See pages 30–31.)
- ☐ Will you use a backdrop or cyclorama? What location or idea does your choice convey?
- ☐ How much set dressing do you need to convey your location?
- ☐ Do you want to create a sparse or busy stage? How will the amount of set dressing, including props and furniture, affect this?
- ☐ How can you use props and furniture to demonstrate the time period of your piece, how rich or poor the characters are, etc.?
- ☐ How many entrance and exit areas does your stage need?

## Costume design (including hair and make-up)

- ☐ What materials and fabrics are you choosing for your costumes?
- ☐ How is your choice affected by the time period, themes or mood of your piece? Are you using particular garments for particular characters? Why?
- ☐ What hairstyles are appropriate for your characters?
- ☐ What costumes, wigs, make-up and accessories are you choosing for your actors? Will they be able to move easily and feel comfortable with them?
- ☐ What colours and patterns are you choosing for your characters?



# Inspiration for devising

## Quotes

Try keeping a quotes book full of sentences you overhear, and practise letting your mind follow ideas about the characters who say them, and what is going on in their lives.

### ACTIVITY 5.1

- 1 Use one of the lines on the right to inspire a monologue or scene.
- 2 Now choose a different line to use as the first line of a scene and explore where you go and who you become.

First of all, it wasn't my fault ...

I'm assuming this is yours?

Don't look at me like that!

We'll laugh about this one day.

## Photographs

### ACTIVITY 5.2

AO1

Choose one of the following photographs to inspire a scene. Think about your choices and emotions – you may be able to devise two completely different scenes from the same photograph.



A cute stare from a sweet pet, or an evil stare from a witch's familiar?



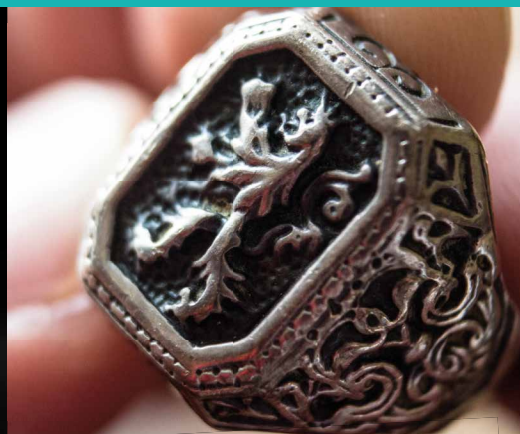
Do you call pest control or get the cheese out for this animal?



## Objects

### ACTIVITY 5.3 AO 1

Choose one of the objects on this page to inspire a scene. Why might it represent a happy or unhappy memory to someone?



## Emotions

### ACTIVITY 5.4

AO 1

Choose one of the following emotions and use it as a prompt for a story. Improvise and discuss it in your group, taking notes of your ideas as you go:

*Jealousy*

*Revenge*

*Hope*

*Greed*

Who are your characters? Perhaps they are a group of friends. What are the conflicts?



## Monologues

### ACTIVITY 5.5

AO1 AO2

In groups of four, decide on a group of people who all know each other well. Something happens that causes a conflict, and you get to show four sides of the same fight.

For example, youngest sibling says older one broke the window, oldest sibling says younger one broke the window, parent who says babysitter should have been watching, babysitter who says they can't be everywhere at once.

The result will be four monologues – and the audience can judge who is in the right, or if everyone is in the wrong.

#### TIP

Discuss as a group how you can raise the stakes – is something physical being argued over (a will, a necklace, a broken window) that represents something bigger (financial independence, the memory of a dead grandparent, personal responsibility)? Explore the facts the characters agree on and what they might disagree on.

## Scenarios

### ACTIVITY 5.6

AO1

Design a scenario based on a conflict. If you can't think of one, let yourself be inspired by any of the pictures on this page.

How do they feel about this conflict?

Choose one of the following:

**Jealousy**

**Hope**

**Ambition**

**Revenge**

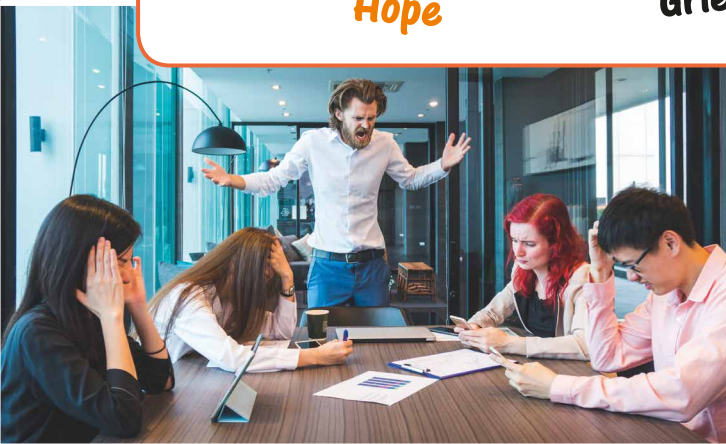
**Grief**

#### TIP

Remember that for any idea you have, it could be interesting to reverse the gender or situation.

#### TIP

Do not worry if you don't fit all your ideas into your final piece – you can always use them for another story. Nothing is ever wasted.



# Practise devising from stimulus

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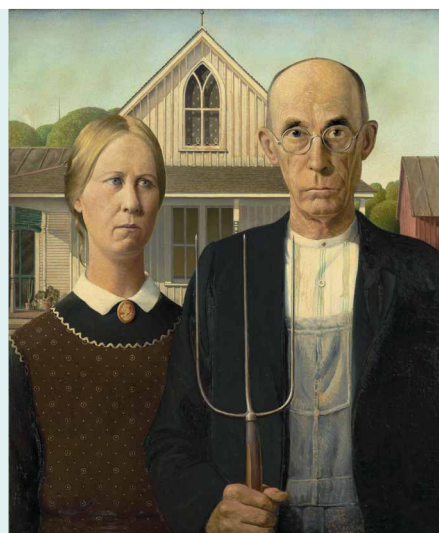
*“Never, never, never, never [...] never give in.”*  
Winston Churchill

*‘Across the Universe’  
by The Beatles*

*The price of fame*

Working in a group of four or five, devise a piece in response to the stimulus you have chosen from the four shown here.

Make sure that you listen to each other’s ideas in the discussions and try out lots of suggestions. Remember, just because it does not sound like it will work in discussion does not mean it won’t be different when you get it ‘on its feet’.



*American Gothic* by Grant Wood  
(The Art Institute of Chicago).

2

*“Youth is wasted  
on the young.”*  
George Bernard Shaw

*‘American Pie’  
by Don McLean*

*The closed door*

In the same group, choose one of the above stimuli. Devise a piece, using some of the dramatic devices discussed on page 16.



*Christina's World*, Andrew Wyeth (Museum of Modern Art, New York).

## TIP

You are very likely to find that you already used some of the dramatic devices instinctively when you did exercise 1 (above). Make a note of these, as it will help you later when choosing the practitioner or genre most suited to your ideas and interests.

## FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

Which stimulus spoke to you? How did you combine your ideas with those of your group?

**Audience evaluation form**

**Group members:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Scene title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the plot as it came across to you:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the characters as they came across to you:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please comment on what you felt worked best:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please comment on anything you did not understand or felt did not work:** \_\_\_\_\_

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