



Pearson  
Edexcel

# GCSE (9-1) Drama

Prescribed Text Guide

*DNA*, Dennis Kelly





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### Recommended edition for Component 3:

*DNA*, Dennis Kelly – ISBN 9781840029529 (Oberon Plays: school edition)

## Summary

Set in a street, a field and a wood, *DNA* follows a group of teenagers as they attempt to cover up their part in a bullying incident that leads to the apparent death of the victim, Adam. The play is in four 'acts' which each follow a similar structure, beginning with a duologue from Jan and Mark and then moving location to show the actions and interactions of the other characters. There are also a number of monologues from one character, to the silent and unresponsive Phil, often eating rather than reacting, largely completing each section.

Events regarding the 'killing' of Adam by the group are revealed vocally/ in flashback although the play begins with the revelation that 'He's dead' in a duologue between Jan and Mark, two teenagers who serve as chorus figures within the play. The characters hatch a plan to get out of trouble and are thrown into chaos when Adam eventually returns from the dead. The characters are faced with difficult choices and must confront the consequences of their actions.

### One

#### *A Street/A Field/A Wood*

Mark and Jan discuss a mysterious death and the action moves between the groups of characters, introducing them and their take on the death of a boy.

It is revealed that this is Adam, a bullied victim of the gang. He is presumed dead after Mark and Jan tell about how they taunted and teased him and led him to a grille covering a deep shaft and threw stones at him as he walked across it and finally fell into the hole, presumed dead. Phil, a largely silent character who spends a lot of time eating and drinking, devises a plan to frame a non-existent person for Adam's death. This plan involves stealing a jumper and a pair of shoes from Adam's house, putting them in a plastic bag to avoid DNA contamination, then conspiring to make a stranger touch the jumper, and put it back into the plastic bag with his DNA on it. The stranger would thus be framed for the murder. Phil's plan also involves having one of the gang members – Brian – telling his headteacher that a fat postman with bad teeth has exposed himself to him in the woods.

The section ends with Leah making a long speech about bonobos, which symbolically links to the group's actions in bullying and apparently killing Adam. Phil does not respond. She ends section 1 by saying, several times, that they are all in trouble now.



## Two

### *A Street/A Wood/A Field*

Mark and Jan report that an unknown character, revealed later to be Brian, has said that 'He's not going'.

The action moves a wood where Leah is talking to a silent Phil about happiness and about Adam's disappearance. She asks him 'What have we done?' Jan and Mark enter and insist on talking.

The action moves once again to a field where the characters are increasingly worried about the situation. Although Phil created the imaginary 'fat postman with bad teeth' after Adam has been reported missing, the police have now found a man who fits the description. This is because Cathy, in an attempt to make the suspect as realistic as possible, found a postman who matched Phil's description, and contrived to have him pick up Adam's jumper when she dropped it. The plan has gone wrong and an innocent man has been framed based on fake DNA evidence. Brian has been asked to go to the police station to identify the man, but he is scared, and refusing to do so. Phil threatens to kill him unless he helps them and Brian finally agrees.

The section ends with Leah and Phil, alone in a field. Leah explains her feeling that if you change just one thing, you can change the world. Phil refuses to answer Leah or respond despite her calling his name repeatedly.

## Three

### *A Street/A Field/A Wood*

The section begins with Jan and Mark revealing to the audience that Cathy has discovered Adam alive and living in the woods.

The action then moves to a field where Leah tells Phil. Phil prepares a waffle with butter and jam throughout this scene. Jan and Mark then enter and insist that Phil and Leah 'come with us'.

The characters are shown grouped around Adam who has clearly been affected by what has happened to him. He speaks haltingly and in a disjointed way and can barely remember his own name, although he does insist that he is not coming back. In a shocking twist, and to save themselves from having to reveal the truth of the gang's actions and plotting, Phil takes charge and demonstrates to Cathy using the oblivious Brian how to kill Adam with a plastic bag. Leah tries to reason with Phil but he exits without responding.

The section ends with Leah and Phil alone on stage in a field. Leah begins to cry and storms off when Phil tries to comfort her.



## Four

### *A Street/A Field*

Jan and Mark begin the section, as in all four parts of the play, revealing that (presumably) Leah has gone having moved schools.

The location moves to the field where Richard and Phil are in brief conversations about what has happened to the others. He ends with a philosophical statement about not being alone in the universe. Phil remains silent and refuses to comment or react, even when Richard asks him to 'Come back, Phil'.

The play ends with Richard and Phil sitting in silence.

## Characters

### Phil

Phil is often silent when present, although he does spend a lot of time eating and drinking and listening to what is going on around him – even if he does not appear to be doing so when, for example, addressed by Leah. When he gives his instructions to the gang, he is cold and callous in the planning of the cover-up and framing, but he also has an air of authority that makes the others obey him.

Phil is a controlling character and, in the gang, this could be reassuring for the others – knowing the strength of character of the person who leads them. Although he ignores her for much of the play, when Leah finally leaves him, this is the only moment when he addresses her. He makes decisions for the gang, not all of which are accepted by all members and, in the final moments of the play he is seen with Richard – a Leah 'substitute', but the relationship is not the same as Phil is not eating.

### Leah

She is certainly insecure in her relationship with Phil – for much of the time they are together, she is attempting to get a response from him. She threatens to leave and, when she eventually does, it is in silence, with him calling after her.

Her monologues – for that is essentially what they are – use various tactics in her attempts to elicit a response from him. Although she is a member of the gang and therefore under Phil's leadership, it is clear that she is intelligent – as in some of her monologues – and has a mind of her own – standing up to Phil over his response to Adam's reappearance. It is unfortunate that she does not have the strength to convince others in the gang not to carry out Phil's plans for Adam and her only course of action is to leave the gang.

Leah displays a sense of loyalty towards Adam – reminding Phil about how long they have known him, for example, and she is a voice of reason at times.

### Jan

With Mark, Jan is responsible for the bullying that leads to Adam falling through the grille. In her description of the events leading to this there is a sense of the cruelty of the actions. He always appears on stage with Mark and often acts a chorus figure.



## Mark

With Jan, Mark is responsible for the bullying that leads to Adam falling through the grille. He tries to justify what they did by saying that Adam was enjoying it. He always appears on stage with Mark and often acts a chorus figure.

## John Tate

John Tate only appears in section 1 and although he is a leader for a time, he is also shown as an insecure bully, using threats to dominate and control the group. However, in the aftermath to Adam's 'death' the audience see him becoming overwhelmed by fear and panicking as he is unable to take control of the situation or the group. He tries to ban the word, 'dead,' and the challenge to his leadership by Richard, who is just trying to calm the others down, causes him further insecurity. When Jan and Mark reveal the full story, John asks the group what they should do, and Phil takes the lead instead. There is no further mention of John Tate until the end of the play, when Richard tells Phil and the audience that John Tate has found God.

## Danny

Danny is shown as a generally balanced character with a clear sense of consequences and of the future, beyond school. Whereas none of the other characters refer to their plans for the future or display any sense of the consequences of their actions on either their future lives or on the lives of others. He has the ambition of training to be a dentist and is seen by the audience as most anxious and upset when he feels this ambition is threatened by that actions of others.

## Richard

Richard first appears to be a balanced, authoritative character. Lou says that she is scared of him and triggered the confrontation between Richard and John Tate. Richard initially stands his ground but he is judged as less capable by the group when asked to pick sides. He subsequently allows John Tate and then Phil to lead the group and demonstrates his feelings verbally, while continuing to do as he is told.

## Lou

Lou is a passive and often quiet character who, like Cathy in particular, is shown to follow whoever the leader is at the time. While she will always will do as she is told, there is also a sense that she is controlled most effectively when she is afraid. She says that she fears John Tate and possibly Richard, creating insecurity in John Tate to panic and driving him to confront Richard. Lou generally speaks using simple dialogue, often agreeing with others, creating the clear sense of her as supporting character



## Cathy

Cathy can be seen as sadistic because he shows no remorse for the gang's actions and certainly finds the situation exciting and better than ordinary life.

It is clear, fairly early on, that she will carry out the wishes of the leader – whoever the leader is – and she enjoys the attentions of John Tate before Phil takes charge and she effectively becomes his deputy in the gang. She is asked to be interviewed on television – which adds to her excitement – with the thought of making money for it. It is Cathy who obtains DNA evidence from an actual postman who fits Phil's fictional description.

It is not clear whether this is accidental or deliberate but, looking at the play in its concluding moments, it is probably the case that she deliberately set out to frame the postman for Adam's 'death'. Her physical violence becomes more obvious – she slaps Brian, for example, and her tone of voice is often aggressive. She is enjoying the attention.

## Brian

Is easily led and is dominated by everyone, particularly Cathy. He is either the youngest or the weakest – or both – as he is the one chosen to report the fictitious incident to his headteacher as he is the one who they think is most likely to be believed. It is Brian who finds Adam living in the woods – and therefore sets in motion the chain of events that follows, although at some personal cost.

## Adam

His return is pivotal to the plot structure of the play, and it is important that his reasons for not going home after recovering from his fall through the grille are articulated effectively. He has had a blow to the head from the fall and his memory of events is weak and his speech is confused and disjointed. As already stated, it is important that this is articulated effectively in order for the subsequent events to be believable within the structure of the play – the normal reaction to falling through the grille and coming round again would be to go home or to seek help from others. Adam does neither of these things, so this must be explained by the blow to the head and this needs to be effectively portrayed for it to make sense to the audience.

The audience learns from Mark and Jan that Adam was enjoying the game they were playing, but there is no evidence of this in Adam's speech when Brian discovered him living in the woods and takes him to meet the others.



## Context to DNA

Including its first performance at the Cottesloe Theatre of the National Theatre in 2008

*Students are required to refer to the context in which the text was created and first performed as part of their response to sub-question (b)(i). This could be the social, political, context and/ or the context to the first performance. The following contextual information may be of support to students when preparing for this question.*

*DNA* was originally commissioned by NT Education as part of its Connections project, and was performed professionally by young actors, for a young audience. Often performed subsequently by youth groups and schools/colleges, the play resonates in its accessibility for a younger audience and performers. The first production was staged 'end on' and the design made use of video projection to create the different locations, with minimal use of stage furniture and set items, creating seamless transitions between locations and suggesting the passing of time.

The play deals with a range of contemporary issues as seen through the eyes of its disaffected and alienated characters. None of them appears to be connected to anyone outside the play, and at times, even their connection with one another appears rather tenuous. We are told of events that happen 'off stage' and places the characters have been – school, the police station, for example – but the play is structured around their world of 'A Street/A field/A wood'. They are outdoors, but do not appear to be at ease with nature, and it is interesting to note in a play written in 2007 the absence of the technology that now dominates most teenagers' lives. It is certainly a play of its time and represents a particular view of teenagers but, in avoiding the obvious communication methods favoured by most teenagers, Dennis Kelly has, in fact, made *DNA* more of a timeless piece – and therefore less likely to date – than, for example, Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2005) which, like Kelly's play, was commissioned by NT Connections.

The characters' names and genders are suggestions only and can be changed to suit performers, which makes their actions and reactions more important to the way the plot unfolds than their gender. The characters live within the world of the play and the events that brought them there, and they rarely comment on anything other than their immediate world and the complications of the relationships through which they explore it. Events outside their world – such as the bullying of Adam, or the collection of DNA, are reported in such a way that the audience is invited to question their accuracy as recounted by what are, on the whole, unreliable witnesses.

The play is divided into 4 sections, each of a similar structure and all centred round the same basic locations – making the staging of the play both simple and challenging, depending on the kind of stage space to be used. The episodes within the four sections are made up of confrontational situations, with, for example, Leah and Phil's exchanges framed around her addressing him with no verbal response from him, creating exchanges that are constructed as a series of monologues. At other times – with Jan and Mark, for example – it is as if two characters are speaking as one, completing each other's sentences as they describe what happened to Adam.

Lack of communication between characters not only helps to create powerful dramatic tension that often explodes into furious argument but is also indicative of many in our society who find it difficult to connect with others on a one-to-one basis or in telling a story can only do so through lines learned and repeated.



*DNA*, as a drama, takes the negativity and nihilism of a group of teenagers to a new level. We see no redeeming features in any of the characters – where there might have been a counter-argument to Phil’s plotting, the character is confined to his room, as in the case of John Tate, or moves schools, as in the case of Leah. Presenting this particular view of teenage life challenges audiences both to understand that there is a whole world of experience going on under our noses that we will never know about, and to recognise that the two boys who murdered James Bulger in 1993 were ten years old at the time – younger than any of the characters in Kelly’s play.

As a result of the initial act of violence and also of Phil’s solution to Adam’s return, this play has provoked intense discussion about right and wrong and our responsibility for each other. It plays out almost like a Greek tragedy or a Shakespearean plot for modern times. In a society that is supposedly governed and driven by a moral code, there is nothing moral in the actions of these characters.

Kelly comments that he wrote the play about the idea of “whether it was right to sacrifice the individual for the many – this for me is the central question in the play– how many wrong things you can do for a greater purpose” rather than directly exploring the idea of teenage gangs. However, the concept of hooded teenagers as threatening and dangerous had become front page news several years before the play was first performed and might be seen an influence for audience and performers.

## Themes in *DNA*

Gender identity is an important theme within *DNA*. The characters’ names and genders can be changed according to Kelly and this affects the dynamics of the gang and also the impact of individual actions on the audience. Kelly suggests that it does not matter whether the characters are male or female, that either sex is capable of carrying out these actions and of being affected by them. Being part of the gang is not about gender, but about an attitude that enables you to belong. An all-female, all-male or reversed-gender cast would enable an exploration of 21st-century gender identity.

*DNA* is often seen as being a play about gangs and belonging. In the episodic structure of the opening duologues, Kelly presents a build-up to the identity of the individuals in the gang before bringing them together to react to the news of Adam’s death. They are seen in disparate pairings at first, and the nature of what they have done is revealed gradually through their reaction to the death of Adam, particularly in relation to the way the events are told by Jan and Mark.

John Tate attempts to ban the word ‘death’, resulting in an attempt by Richard to take control of the gang. The intervention of Phil – largely silent until this point – gives the plot its sinister twist and explores the nature of belonging and how far gang members are prepared to go to be part of the gang. Phil has not spoken up to this point, despite his girlfriend, Leah, attempting to engage him in conversation. Now he sets out a plan to shift the blame for Adam’s death away from the group – with *DNA* as part of the cover.

Jan, in her description of the attack on Adam, appears to relish her role in it. Cathy, having found a match for the fictitious description of the alleged attacker, assumes the role of gang leader by the end of the play, while Leah leaves, unable to cope with Phil’s response to Adam’s reappearance. Being part of the gang and belonging to it appear to be fluid states as members age, become disillusioned or find other interests.



Kelly explores psychological bullying as well as the physical abuse of Adam, and clear parallels can be drawn with recent real-life cases of bullying that ruined people's lives. Phil is perhaps the most interesting character, as he does not respond to Leah's appeals for assurance and security. His seemingly callous disregard for her feelings amounts to bullying, and his reaction to her leaving at the end of the play is a surprise – it is the only time we hear him address her directly – when it is too late.

John Tate appears to bully mercilessly to keep power. He disappears from the action early but is referenced as having 'lost it' and 'found God' as the play progresses. Kelly reminds us through a few characters that their actions clearly have consequences.

This gang – like all gangs – has its weaker members. Danny, the aspiring dentist, and Brian, for example, are used ruthlessly by Phil to help in the cover-up, but their compliance is only assured through threats of a fate like the one suffered by Adam. Everyone is arguably damaged by what happens, whether it is John Tate taking to his room, Leah moving schools, or Phil being abandoned by Leah.

The play demands that the audience question who is ultimately responsible for the group's callous behaviour towards Adam, exploring the theme of responsibility, both in the initial attack and later, when he reappears as a feral child living under a hedge, apparently untouched by the kind of searches carried out in the real world when a child disappears.

The characters fight to save themselves from blame or, at least, to find some justification for their actions. Jan and Mark consistently refer to 'laughing' and being 'in stitches' as they recount Adam's desperately sad attempts to be accepted by the group as he was made to eat leaves, steal vodka, had cigarettes stubbed out on him and ultimately fell to his 'death'. The shock and guilt are seen in the almost throwaway exchanges such as when Leah says to Phil: 'you're not human'.

As a collective, the gang take responsibility as a shared 'burden', a device designed to keep all the gang members quiet. The structure of the gang appears to be that they are all in it together but, like Orwell's *Animal Farm*, some are more in it than others.

When, for example, Phil states, 'I'm in charge. Everyone is happier. What's more important: one person or everyone?', he is starting to make them all feel that they cannot step back from the solution to Adam's reappearance. By carrying out Phil's plan, the gang will be responsible for cold-blooded murder, not accidental manslaughter. For Phil, this seems like a small step after he has insisted that Brian positively identify the completely innocent postman whose DNA was found on Adam's jumper.

The core themes of self and group identity, bullying, cruelty and responsibility should allow all young people to develop opinions about the consequences faced by the characters in this play – and, interestingly, why there is no mention of mobile phones or other devices mentioned in the play, almost as if the gang will form its own network.



## Resources for *DNA*

There are a wealth of resources available on the Pearson Edexcel website and these are being added to and updated regularly. These resources, including the [Sample Assessment Materials, and Additional Specimen paper](#), are free to download.

The recommended edition of the text contains notes on the text and suggestions for student activities.

### Further reading

*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

This novel inspired some of the memories within the play and the writer's use of magic realism was also influential to the devising company.

### Online resources

Other resources

[www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk)

Free downloadable resource from the NT production of the play

<http://simondaw.com/portfolio/dna/>

Production images from the first production, from the portfolio of designer Simon Daw

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/jul/16/theatre1>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/mar/01/theatre.art>

Brief review of the first productions as part of the connections festival

[www.ayoungentheatre.com](http://www.ayoungentheatre.com)

A review of Hull Truck's production of the play, on tour, at the Unicorn Theatre

[www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/9052744/Dennis-Kelly-Rioters-thought-there-were-no-rules-but-my-characters-know-right-from-wrong.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/9052744/Dennis-Kelly-Rioters-thought-there-were-no-rules-but-my-characters-know-right-from-wrong.html)

Interview with Dennis Kelly

[https://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/cmsUploads/show/files/DNA\\_Resource\\_Pack\\_NEW.pdf](https://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/cmsUploads/show/files/DNA_Resource_Pack_NEW.pdf)

Resource pack from the Birmingham Repertory theatre production



[https://www.nyt.org.uk/sites/default/files/u386/dna\\_edu\\_pack\\_saved\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.nyt.org.uk/sites/default/files/u386/dna_edu_pack_saved_for_web.pdf)

The NYT resource pack from the 2016 production

You Tube is a useful resource and teachers and students may find theatrical versions of the play useful, some full length, while others are extracts. These can be used to suggest ideas for staging and the ways in which the characters can be portrayed. Past production/ rehearsal photos can also be found online and these may offer ideas for performers, directors and designers

### **Soundtracks that may be useful when exploring *DNA*:**

- music from any current artist to punctuate/underscore or simply to mark a change of time/location
- various location sound effects – street/field/wood – to support the isolation of the characters but to indicate the presence of a world around them – available online.

## **Practical activities to help prepare for Component 3**

The following suggested exercises may help students practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *DNA*, and to have some practical experience of bringing the text to life.

Students must respond to the text as performers, directors and designers, so practical experience of all of these roles will be useful. However, the questions are grouped into two areas:

- activities for performers and for directors of performers
- activities for designers and for directors of production elements.

### **1. Performers and Directors of Performers: Questions (a)(i), (a)(ii) and (b)(ii)**

There are a number of performance elements which will come up across these 3 questions:

- vocal skills/voice
- physical skills/movement
- non-verbal communication
- stage space and stage directions.

Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each performance element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance, as well as a grasp of how to use these elements as a performer and as a director.



Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. Students might explore moments from the play that the audience does not explicitly see.

For example:

- the bullying of Adam
- the incident where he falls off the grille
- Cathy and Brian planting the postman's DNA
- Cathy finding Adam in the woods.

Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation and to explore motive/ objective. This could be combined with off-text improvisation. For example, an interesting exercise might be to create a news report for which some of the characters are interviewed for the local media after reporters are alerted to events surrounding Adam's disappearance. Each character will have a different viewpoint, but there will be an element of control by Phil in what is said. It would also be interesting to have John Tate and Leah interviewed, perhaps years after the events.

This kind of activity might be particularly useful as students are first exploring the play.

It would also help students to consider the journey of the character in the context of the complete text. This would work well to develop understanding of improvisation work early on in the process, but would also be an excellent practical revision technique for students.

Exploring voice and vocal skills such as volume, pitch, tone, pace, pause, emphasis, accent and dialect can also help performers and directors of performers to consider character choices. How might vocal choices help the audience understand where characters come from? How might they show an understanding of the character at that moment within the play?

Still image and mime are often highly effective in exploring the use of physical skills and non-verbal communication and the use of space. Students could be given the opportunity to look at relationships and emotions within a given moment from the text by creating either a short sequence of mime or a series of still images. Using facial expression, movement, gesture, posture and their proxemics (or position within the performance space) will enhance their understanding of how these characters might be feeling at this moment, or what they might want to achieve.

Following practical activities, evaluating the ways in which performance skills have been used and asking students to offer reasons for their performance choices verbally after sharing work, will also help students become more confident with the relevant vocabulary.

Staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus is also a helpful activity for students. This focus might be the kind of statement to be found in question (b)(ii) for example, '**Phil says, 'I'm in charge'**'. Assigning the role of director to one student within each the group and asking the director to verbally justify or give reasons for the choices made when staging the scene, similarly will help all students to grasp the role of the director and to feel more confident about responding on paper to question (b)(ii).



Once students are more confident in working as a director, or with a student director, further explorative activities might be useful. For example, exploring the use of proxemics and stage space with the director. The director assigns roles and gives each character a double who feeds lines to the performer, allowing the performers to move around the space without needing to hold a script. The director gives clear suggestions for the use of space and movement to the performers. This could also be applied to vocal and/ or physical skills.

## 2. Designers and Directors of Production Elements: Questions (b) (i) and (c)

There are 6 production/ design elements which will come up across these 2 questions:

- staging
- set
- props and stage furniture
- costume
- lighting
- sound.

3 of these will be possible options on each question with all 6 appearing on the paper each year. Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each production/ design element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance. A grasp of how the differences in approaching these elements as a director and as a director will also be valuable.

It might be useful to set up a **production meeting** and pitch for your students. In this model, for example, a small group of five could consist of a director, set, costume, sound and lighting designers. The director then asks important questions to each member of the production team in order to develop a creative concept for a production of the play and then sells a potential 'theatrical' pitch to the teacher (producer or 'dragon' in order to secure funding).

The teacher should support students by ensuring that the students all have a good understanding of the text and of appropriate performance styles for this text. Each member of each production team must justify their ideas by referring to key moments from the play. This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the written examination.

Exploring different music and sound effects for key moments is another effective way of considering how sound design can play an important role in the development of a key idea of theme. There are a number of sound cues within the text already and these could be created live or using recorded sound. Similarly, there are opportunities for music and sound to be used to create atmosphere and/ or location, for example, in the rainforest, or when Sophie's memory is disappearing.

It is worth considering how **lighting** might be used to create atmosphere and the different locations within the play. There are a number of lighting changes and blackouts within the play text and these could be created using colour, intensity and specific lighting effects such as gobos. Different kinds of lamp could also be used to create shadows and suspense, for example in the final section of the play when Alex is trying to make his choice.



If access to lighting is limited, students might want to consider experimenting with torches, as well as researching previous productions and lighting designs to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact. There are also computer programmes available that will help to create a virtual set and lighting grid for a production of the play.

Creating a model box or stage plan of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene or episode will be played in a potential space, and to choose a specific stage. By creating this visually they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas when writing about set, stage furniture or staging in particular. *DNA* was originally staged with a deliberately minimalistic set but students may choose to create a more specific set, using levels, and/or simple stage furniture such as blocks or rostra, projection of images and/or scene titles to make the different locations and the differences between the time periods clearer for the audience.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is designing potential costumes and props. Research is key and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. Students could be asked to link their intentions with the initial production, as they will need to do in question (b)(i) either because they are adopting a similar approach or because they are developing different ideas. The time in which the play is set is not specified but was generally contemporary to 2002 in the first production. Students may choose to make the time period more specific; costume designers will also need to think about how the physical style of the play will be supported through the style of the costume for each character.

While the majority of these activities will result in informal sharing within the class, using the set text as the basis for more formal performance work is also worth considering. *DNA* is a prohibited text for Component 2. However, students might complete a mock performance from text in year 10 using extracts from their prescribed text. This will not only support performance and design skills; it will also help students to become confident with staging extracts from the play for an audience.