

Dear Drama / Theatre Studies Student

The transition work below will give you a great head start for when you return to school. When you have completed the work, please feel free to email me dhayes@st-pauls.leicester.sch.uk if you would like any more tasks to further prepare you for the course.

Task 1: The Duck Variations (David Mamet)

Read this.....

The Duck Variations is a 1972 play by American playwright David Mamet. The play depicts a discussion taking place between two elderly men sitting on a park bench watching ducks. The dialogue begins with the mating habits of ducks and runs to examine law, friendship and death. The principal irony is that the men really know nothing about ducks. If they did, it would not improve their beautiful fugue on the theme of the possibility of happiness. Rather they use what experience has taught them and scattered, possibly incorrect ideas and facts to make guesses. They each assure the other that their guesses are established fact. By argument and occasional agreement a composite view of ducks and by extension, the world, begins to emerge.

The play is focused around two old men who randomly meet on a park bench. Although it is usually played that the two men do not know of each other, (the stage directions are ambiguous—they could meet, or they could be old friends) they awkwardly begin to talk to each other. As they fumble for topics to speak upon, somehow they always end up reverting to the ducks swimming around in the lake. Although their conversations seem misguided, as they talk about the ducks, many wise conversations are actually discussed. They talk about the leader of the ducks, and how every other duck follows that leader. When the leader duck dies, then a new leader must be chosen. They also talk about how everything the ducks do has a purpose. Within the dialog of the men, they talk about why things occur naturally, friendship, and death, not only in reference to the ducks, but also in human nature.

The play is a comedy.

When you return you will be performing the 13th variation with a partner. Please read it (p36 attached PDF). You do not need to read the whole play as we just focus on the 13th variation. Within the variation on P39 George has a monologue. The monologue begins with, ' until off in the distance' and ends with, ' Your heart is going fast.' We would like you to devise, rehearse and perform this monologue. Please record your performance and bring it with you when we return to school.

Task 2: Widows (Ariel Dorfman)

You will be studying the play 'Widows' by Ariel Dorfman. We will read it as a class and then you will choose sections to perform as part of your coursework.

'Widows' is set in a village. Only the women are remaining. They do not know what has happened to their men; their fathers, uncles, brothers, husbands, sons. They have been 'disappeared.' They do not know if they are dead or alive. They do not know if they should be grieving or waiting.

Dorfman states that he wants 'Widows' to remain universal because this type of political situation repeats itself around the world again and again (think back to your PHSE/History lessons on the Holocaust). For this reason, Dorfman deliberately does not state where the play takes place or the date "My country? Does it matter?...Do I really need to name that country?" Dorfman wants the audience to think about today's world and where this type of situation could be happening now.

However, we know from researching Dorfman's background that he was exiled from Chile due to the oppressive Pinochet regime. These past events still haunt Chilean citizens today. Read the 2019 'Guardian' article and create your own monologue inspired by what you have read. Feel free to research the Pinochet regime further. You could devise your monologue from the point of view of survivors today, victims of the regime, perpetrators or members of today's government having to deal with this issue now. Come to the start of the course, ready to perform your monologue.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/14/where-are-they-families-search-for-chile-disappeared-prisoners>