

## Act One

This section looks at performance skills and design features using the kind of close analysis you should be doing in the exam — excited yet? If you want a reminder of the plot, look back at the introduction (p.4-5).

### Act One creates a mood of anxiety

- 1) Act One plays an important role in establishing the mood and atmosphere of the play — there are humorous moments, but these are overshadowed by the dominant mood of fear and unease. The act also introduces the characters and shows the relationships between them.
- 2) The play opens with Mark telling Jan that someone is dead — this creates suspense and establishes a tense mood as the audience waits to find out who has died and how the characters are involved.
- 3) The action moves to “A Field”, where Leah talks to Phil. The contrast between Phil’s silence and Leah’s chattiness is initially funny. However, Phil’s silence becomes unnerving, especially when Leah tells him she’s scared — this creates tension as it makes the audience wonder why she’s afraid.
- 4) In the next scene, John Tate tries to assert his authority over the group but shows himself to be a weak leader. This scene establishes the characters’ personalities and relationships, whilst adding to the fearful mood.
- 5) The mood darkens further when Jan and Mark describe Adam’s fall down the mineshaft. The details of the bullying and their attempts to deny responsibility create an unsettling atmosphere.
- 6) The anxious mood continues to the end of Act One. The audience is left guessing whether Phil’s plan to cover up Adam’s ‘death’ will work, and Leah’s statement that the group are in trouble heightens the ominous mood going into the second act.



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Phil has a focused facial expression as Mark describes Adam’s fall.

### Leah reveals her insecurities

See p.26-28 for more ideas on how to perform the character of Leah.

- 1) Act One (“A Field”) is the first impression the audience get of Leah’s and Phil’s characters and relationship.
- 2) Leah’s monologue reveals her lack of self-confidence and desire for understanding and reassurance from Phil. An actor playing Leah could show how she feels using performance skills:

#### Physical Skills — Movement and Proxemics

- An actor could use movement and proxemics to show how Leah is feeling. When she says “Not that I’m bothered”, she could move away from Phil to show she’s embarrassed. When she “sits”, she could leave a gap between her and Phil to highlight the emotional distance between them. Later in the monologue, when she admits to being “scared”, she could move closer to Phil as if she is seeking reassurance.
- As Leah talks about fear, she could move round to face Phil — this would show her desire for closeness and comfort from him.
- Leah could fidget to show that she feels anxious — she might wring her hands or keep shifting her position to show that she is uncomfortable and self-conscious.

#### Vocal Skills — Volume, Emphasis and Pace

- An actor playing Leah could speak loudly when she says “I’m not bothered, Phil” to show that she is pretending to be confident. This could contrast with a quiet delivery of lines such as “Everyone’s scared. S’not just me” to show her real, vulnerable self.
- She could stress words such as “scared” and “terror” to emphasise her fear.
- When Leah talks about the fact that she “talks too much”, she could speak quickly as if the words are tumbling out — this could suggest that Phil’s silence makes her nervous.
- Leah could trail off on sentences that end with an ellipsis, such as “You need me as much as...” to suggest that she doesn’t really believe what she’s saying.

# Act One

## John Tate tries to control the group

1) In Act One ("A Wood"), John Tate tries to assert his authority over the group, but in doing so shows he is **scared** of losing control. The actors could use **performance skills** to show their status:

### Physical Skills — Movement

- John Tate could **pace** around the stage to show that he's anxious about losing his power over the group. When Richard stands up to John Tate and says that he "shouldn't threaten" him, John Tate could **puff his chest** out and **stride confidently** up to Richard to show he wants to intimidate him.
- When each character confirms they are on John Tate's "side", they could physically **move** to **stand next** to him, possibly with their head lowered to show their obedience to him.
- When Phil enters, he could **move** to centre stage while John Tate **moves swiftly** to one **side**. This would imply that John Tate wants **Phil** to **take control** of the group.

2) At this point in Act One, the audience are forming their **first impressions** of the rest of the group. The actors' **costumes** help to shape the audience's **initial reaction**:

### Costume Design — Clothing and Accessories

- The characters could wear **school uniforms** to reflect their age. However, subtle differences and additions can hint at one aspect of a character's **personality** and **status** in the group. For example: Danny could wear glasses and a neat uniform to suggest he is **studious**.
- Brian could wear clothes that are **out of fashion** and differ slightly from everyone else's to highlight that he is an **outsider**. For example, Brian could wear a **poorly fitting school blazer** while the others wear **fashionable jackets**.
- John Tate could have a **cigarette** behind his ear and an untucked shirt to show he is a **rebel**.

## Jan and Mark describe Adam's fall down the mineshaft

- 1) Jan and Mark's account of what happened to Adam creates a **tense** and **unsettling** atmosphere as they gradually reveal the increasingly **brutal** details of their bullying. **Lighting** could be used to focus the audience's attention on the pair's growing **guilt** as they describe their actions.
- 2) A profile **spotlight** could be trained on Jan and Mark to show that the group's attention is on them. The light could gradually grow **brighter** to draw attention to their **uncomfortable, guilty** facial expressions.
- 3) After Jan says she "went home", the spotlight beam could **narrow** around Mark to **isolate** him from the rest of the group.
- 4) **Floodlights** rigged above the performance space could light the **entire stage** as John Tate says "Dead. He's dead". This would show that the group's attention is no longer on Mark and would refocus the audience on the group's present situation.

### Physical Skills — Proxemics

- Jan and Mark could **stand together** at the start of their dialogue to show their **close relationship**.
- When Jan says she "went home", she could **move away** from Mark to show she is **distancing** herself from the responsibility for Adam's fall.
- The rest of the group could **stand away** from the pair to disassociate themselves from Adam's fall. The actor playing John Tate could emphasise this by **looking away** when Jan and Mark say his name.



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## Act One

### Phil devises a plan to cover up the truth about Adam

- 1) As Phil outlines his plan, his leadership and the other characters' reactions to his plan could be shown through movements and facial expressions.
- 2) The stage directions indicate silence before Phil's speech, which could be used to create anticipation about what will happen next. The actor playing Phil could put his drink down slowly to draw the audience's attention.
- 3) Phil could use decisive hand gestures, such as pointing when giving instructions like "enter the woods from the south entrance", to show his authority. He could also close his eyes and frown when he is interrupted to show he is concentrating on his plan.



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#### Theatrical Conventions

The scene could end with a tableau where all the characters except Phil freeze as Phil picks up his drink. This would emphasise the importance of the moment by fixing it in the audience's minds as the point where the cover-up begins.

- 4) Characters like Richard and Danny, who are given instructions they don't like, could clench their fists or scowl to indicate their annoyance. They could quickly go back to listening intently with their arms folded to suggest they're still not happy but have accepted Phil's decision. This would show how strong Phil's control is — Richard and Danny can't oppose him for too long.
- 5) An actor playing Cathy could show her enjoyment of the situation by smiling slyly and nodding enthusiastically. This would hint at her lack of morals and her desire to please whoever is in charge.

### Leah attempts to strangle herself

- 1) Leah's monologue emphasises her desperate need for Phil's attention — she's even prepared to hurt herself to get it. Lighting can be used to set the mood throughout the scene.
- 2) Immediately before Leah starts to strangle herself, soft white light could be used to create a gentle mood. This would make Leah's sudden action more shocking as she "grabs her throat".
- 3) At this point, the white lights could cut out and be replaced by a spotlight focused through a red gel. The red light would make the scene more intense, and colour symbolism would reflect the danger Leah is in. When she "stops", the red light could fade and the white lights come back up to show the danger's over.
- 4) As Leah says "We're in trouble now", the white stage lighting could start to fade to create a foreboding atmosphere going into the next act.

#### Set Design — Scenery and Staging

- Images of different weather conditions could be projected onto a cyclorama upstage to reflect different moods, e.g. clear blue skies could be replaced by dark clouds when Leah threatens to kill herself.
- Trucks painted with dark, lifeless bushes and trees could be positioned behind the actors. This would act as a visual reminder of the forest and the cover-up, giving a darker edge to the scene.
- A wooden box covered in hay to look like a hay bale could form a raised platform stage right. Leah could use this as a stage when she strangles herself, reinforcing that she's doing it to get Phil's attention.
- During her monologue about bonobos, Leah could stand on the outer ring of a revolving stage, while Phil sits on the stationary inner ring. Leah's orbit around Phil would reflect the way her life centres on him and how important he is to her.



### Leah is so into Phil — he leaves her breathless...

The decisions made by the director, actors and designers have an impact on the mood and atmosphere. Consider the overall effect you want to create before settling on any performance or design ideas.

## Act Two

Four days have passed since Act One and Phil's plan is working perfectly — no one has any clue where Adam is, and the group are getting along nicely. I imagine things go really well from here. (They do not.)

### Act Two gives the group a moral dilemma

- 1) Things get more **complicated** in Act Two as the group hear about the postman's arrest. Their varying reactions to this and the resulting arguments allow a director to explore some of the play's **themes**.
- 2) Lou, Danny and Leah are **panicky** and **confused** about why the postman has been arrested, until Cathy reveals that she got DNA from someone who matched the description Phil made up. This news creates a **moral dilemma** because the group have to decide whether to save themselves or the postman.



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The characters' body language shows their different reactions to the postman's arrest.

- 3) Brian **refuses** to identify the postman — the fact that he stands up to the group shows how desperate he is. Phil **threatens** Brian down the mineshaft if he doesn't lie — Phil's brutal threat and Brian's terror highlight Phil's **power**.
- 4) The act ends with Leah talking about **déjà vu** and **change**. This scene creates opportunities for **humour**, but concludes with Phil's refusal to accept that the world can be changed — this creates a sense of **hopelessness** going in to Act Three.

⚡ Déjà vu is when you feel like you've done or seen something before.

### The group find out the postman has been arrested

- 1) The group are **frantic** as they learn that a postman is in custody for kidnapping Adam. This is already a **tense moment**, but its impact on the audience can be enhanced through the use of sound.
- 2) **Diegetic** sounds like bird song could be used to make the setting of the wood more vivid for the audience. These sounds could stop abruptly when the characters start arguing. A sound effect of wind **whistling** through trees could be played to highlight the breaks in dialogue and add to the **fearful mood**.
- 3) Kelly uses beats and pauses to indicate when important information about the postman's arrest has been revealed or is about to be revealed. **Non-diegetic** sound such as a low drum beat could mark each of these moments to build the audience's sense of anticipation.
- 4) **Ominous** string music could be played live to highlight the trouble the group are in — the music could start quietly and gradually get louder, cutting out suddenly when Leah says the group may be "a little bit, well, screwed." This would emphasise Leah's line and the group's seemingly impossible situation.

### Set Design — Scenery

- A **projection** of towering trees upstage could make the actors look small in comparison to their surroundings. This would reflect how the group use the wood to **hide** from society. It could also suggest how **powerless** the group are to stop events from spiralling out of control after they make the initial decision to cover up Adam's 'death'.
- A designer could dress some scaffolding in **camouflage netting** to make it look like a wood — the tangled netting would create a sense that the characters feel **trapped** and **unable to escape** their situation. Characters could rustle through this netting as they enter — this would create **tension** as the characters on stage **turn nervously** to see who is coming.
- **Colour symbolism** could be used to convey meaning — **brown, dying leaves** scattered across the stage could represent **death** and **decay** and add to the fearful mood.

## Act Two

### Phil threatens to throw Brian down the mineshaft

- 1) Brian refuses to go to the police and identify the postman. Knowing that this could jeopardise the cover-up, Phil threatens him. Actors could highlight Phil's power over Brian using physical skills.
- 2) When Phil "walks over" to Brian, he could use an upright posture to appear taller and more powerful. His steps could be deliberately slow to show that he wants to intimidate Brian.
- 3) To show his dominance, Phil could stand close to Brian, bring his face right up to Brian's and force eye contact with him. This would show that Phil is in control of the situation and hint at his aggressive side.
- 4) Phil could also use physical contact to intimidate Brian — the stage directions say he "lays a hand on his shoulder", which may prevent Brian moving away from him. Phil could also put his finger to Brian's lips when he says "shhhh". This would mean that Brian can't protest vocally and would highlight that Phil is in total control.
- 5) An actor playing Brian could hunch his body, cover and look down at his feet to show his fear. As Phil talks, Brian could bite his lip to suggest he's trying not to cry. He might flinch when Phil touches him to show he is afraid of Phil.

#### Effect on the Audience

The more threatening Phil is in this scene, the more the audience will sympathise with Brian's eventual decision to go along with Phil's plan.

#### Sound Design — Sound Effects

Sound effects could be used to emphasise how real Phil's threats feel to Brian. For example, the sound of rocks clinking against metal could be made live off stage when Phil says "We'll throw rocks". When Phil says "You'll fall into the cold", a recording of a scream fading as if someone is falling could be used to reflect Brian's terror and add to the uneasy mood.

### Leah talks to Phil about change

- 1) Leah's monologue at the end of Act Two offers many opportunities for humour. An actor's vocal skills are important in shaping how the audience responds to this scene.
- 2) To create humour, an actor playing Leah could convey her excitement about her moment of déjà vu by speaking quickly, loudly and at a high pitch. She could stress words like "exactly" and "knew" to show her belief in what she's saying. Her enthusiasm about something so innocent could be amusing for the audience.

#### Effect on the Audience

Leah's comment that she has "been here before" creates dramatic irony because of the repeated structure of the play. This could be humorous for the audience.



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Leah has a hopeful facial expression as she waits for Phil to speak.

- 3) An actor could show Leah's growing frustration at Phil's silence when she repeats his name. The repetition of "Phil?" could initially be delivered in a sing-song voice to suggest she's asking sweetly, then with increasing volume and a harsher tone to reflect how annoyed she is — this could create humour for the audience.
- 4) The end of the monologue is more downbeat. Leah questions whether people have the power to "change things". She claims to believe they do, but an actor could use a hesitant tone to say "Well I do". This would make the audience doubt her claim, and hint that the group are doomed to continue making bad decisions.



### You've probably heard my déjà vu joke before...

You should think about how all the elements of a production affect the audience's experience, from facial expressions to the use of sound effects. Make sure you're confident writing about all the different elements.

# Act Three

Things only seem to get worse for the group in Act Three — Adam is found living in a hedge and Phil comes up with a plan to kill him so people don't find out the group lied. The games kids play these days...

## Act Three ramps up the tension

- 1) The **tension** increases in Act Three as the characters are forced to make another tough decision. The act eventually reaches a **dramatic climax**, where the tension is at its **highest**.
- 2) Adam's return is the **driving force** behind the tension in this act. Cathy **explains** that she and Brian found Adam in a hedge and she threatened him to make him come out. At the same time, Brian shows signs of a **mental breakdown** by eating soil and babbling about irrelevant topics. The behaviour of these two characters will make the audience **uneasy**.
- 3) The tension rises when Adam tells his side of the story in a **disjointed** way — it is clear that he is **physically** and **mentally ill**. The group's decision to send Adam back to the hedge rather than help him builds tension further and creates **dread** about what will happen to Adam.

### Effect on the Audience

In Act Three, the audience is likely to feel sorry for Adam. This will make Leah, who stands up for him, more likeable, and characters like Phil and Cathy, who opt to kill him, less likeable.

## Cathy and Brian explain how they found Adam

Cathy grows increasingly frustrated at Brian's childlike mental state as they explain how they found Adam — actors could use **physical** and **vocal skills** to show the characters' feelings and relationship.

### Physical Skills — Movement and Expression

- Cathy could **stand still** while Brian **bounces** around her. Brian's eccentric actions could **add humour**, but they would also highlight his **troubled** mental state.
- Brian could approach other characters with **open arms** and **grab** Cathy's hand when he says that everyone should "hold hands". This would **contrast** with his earlier **subdued** and **frightened** manner.
- An actor could show that Cathy is becoming increasingly annoyed with Brian by **frowning** or **rolling her eyes** every time he speaks. This could create **tension** as the audience would sense that Cathy is losing her patience.
- Cathy's irritation comes to a head when she "slaps" Brian — she could do this **without warning** and remain **expressionless** as she does it to make it more **shocking**.

### Vocal Skills — Tone and Volume

- Cathy could deliver most of her lines in a **deadpan tone** to show a lack of emotion. She could use a **cheerful** tone when she talks about gouging Adam's eye out — this would make her sound more **sinister**.
- Cathy could speak **loudly** over Brian when she interrupts him. This would highlight her **irritation** with Brian, and suggest that she is pretending he is not there.
- An actor playing Brian could deliver his lines in an **excited tone** to reflect his new **lack of inhibitions**. He could also say lines like "I found him, I found him" in a **singsong** voice to make him seem like a **young child** — this may be disturbing for the audience.

Stage fighting needs to be safe — the actors should rehearse how to make the slap seem real without harming one another.



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## Act Three

### Adam tells his side of the story

- 1) Adam's monologue shows that he is injured and mentally ill. An actor could use vocal skills to show Adam's damaged physical and mental state and create unease in the audience.
- 2) Adam's monologue is spread over numerous lines and filled with pauses and ellipses. These hesitations could be drawn out to suggest that Adam is having difficulty piecing events together. He could deliver the lines in a weak tone to show his fragile state — this would make the audience sympathise with him.
- 3) The speed of Adam's speech could vary. Parts such as "walking, crawling in this dark" could come out in a rush to show that remembering the fall scares him. He could trail off on other points to suggest he's reliving the experience — for example, when he says the light is "high, high...", he could speak slowly and let his voice fade to suggest he's picturing the light.
- 4) Emphasis could be placed on words like "dead" and "dark" to suggest Adam's primal fear of these things.
- 5) An actor could vary the volume of Adam's monologue to suggest different emotions — he could speak in a quiet voice to show fear, but he could raise his voice for lines like "I do know my name" to show that he feels the need to defend himself against the group.

### Costume Design — Hair and Make-Up

- A designer could use make-up to make Adam's eyes look red and add dark bags underneath. This would make him appear tired and ill.
- The "gash" on Adam's forehead could be made to stand out by giving the actor pale foundation and using vivid red make-up for the injury. This sign of physical injury would make the audience more sympathetic towards him.
- The stage directions say Adam's hair is "matted". A designer could use wax to make his hair look tangled and dark powder to make it look dirty, showing that Adam isn't taking care of himself.

### Leah realises that Phil intends to kill Adam

- 1) It's initially unclear to both Leah and the audience that Phil is planning Adam's murder. Leah's growing realisation and the way that Phil cuts her out of the discussion could be shown through proxemics.
- 2) Leah asks Phil "what are you doing?" when it becomes clear he doesn't plan to help Adam. She could stand in close proximity to Phil — this would show that she is standing up to him and that she is determined to change his mind.
- 3) When Phil talks to Cathy and Brian, he could stand close to them and at a distance from Leah so that she is alone — this would show she is cut off from the group. This would emphasise Phil's control — he is able to dictate who is in or out of the group.
- 4) When Cathy says "Yeah. I do." she could stand right next to Phil to highlight her rising status in the group.
- 5) At the end of the scene, Phil and Leah are the only characters on stage — they could stand at opposite ends of the stage to emphasise the emotional distance between them.



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### Effect on the Audience

The audience may empathise with Leah's helplessness because they also want to prevent Adam's death but are unable to do so.



### What kind of person dies twice — A-dam unlucky one...

You can do a lot in Act Three to create different effects on the audience. Although you may have loads of good ideas, it's important in the exam to keep your answer focused on answering the question.



Writing about how to direct, perform and design some parts of the play will be harder than others. Don't panic — there are no right or wrong suggestions. Just explain the reasons behind each of your choices.

### This ending is too sour for even Phil to digest...

- 1) Richard's description of what's happening shows the **impact** of the play's events on the group. An actor playing Richard could use **vocal skills** to create a sense of **hopelessness** in their futures.
- 2) Richard could **stress** words like "insane" and "hates". This would emphasise the **negativity** of the characters' lives and create a **mood of despair**.
- 3) He could use a **worried tone** to say "I feel sorry for Lou" — this would suggest to the audience that things may continue to **get worse** for the characters.
- 4) Questions like "Aren't you interested?" could be delivered in a **loud voice** to indicate Richard's **annoyance** at Phil's lack of reaction. Richard's final line, "Phil?", could be delivered in an **uncertain, trembling** voice to highlight his **concern** and create a **downbeat ending**.

**Sombre music** could fade in as Richard says "You can't stay here forever" and continue until the end of the play. This would enhance the **mournful mood**.

#### Sound Design — Underscoring

### Richard explains what everyone is doing

Jan and Mark's clothes and hair styles in this scene could be just as **neat** and **fashionable** as **earlier** in the play — this would communicate that their lives have continued as **normal**.

#### Costume Design — Clothing and Hair

- 1) On a **thrust stage**, Jan and Mark could stand **upstage**, far away from the apron. Their **distance** from the audience would emphasise their **detachment** from the rules and values of **society**.
- 2) If they stood **together** in the centre of a **large** performance space, it would emphasise their continuing **closeness** and hint that they are **united** against the rest of the world.
- 3) Staging the play **in the round** would mean that the characters were **surrounded** by the audience. This could give the sense that society is **watching** them, hinting that their **secrets** may not remain **hidden** for long.

There's little to suggest that Jan and Mark have been **greatly affected** by the events of the play. **Staging** could be used to reinforce this interpretation when they talk at the start of Act Four. For example:

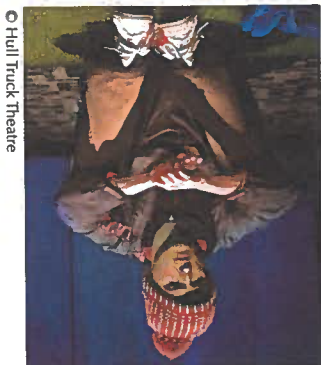
### Jan and Mark talk about Leah moving away

- 1) Act Four leaves lots of issues **unresolved**, such as whether the postman is convicted and what Phil will do. However, the audience does learn that most of the characters have changed **for the worse** — this creates a **gloomy mood**.
- 2) Jan and Mark's language in their final dialogue, as with previous dialogues, is **vague**. This creates tension — the audience hopes to find out about Adam but instead learns that Leah has moved away.
- 3) The play ends with Richard trying to convince Phil to rejoin the group. Richard's **negative** descriptions of the other characters' lives, along with Phil's silence, creates a **sombre ending** to the play.

### Act Four ends unhappily

The group have successfully got away with murder by the time Act Four rolls around — hooray! But Leah has left, Phil is moping and the group is worse off than before. Maybe not hooray...

## Act Four



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## Practice Questions

I imagine you're feeling a lot closer to the play after all of that close analysis. The best way to show how much you've taken in is by trying these questions — remember to write a paragraph or so for the in-depth ones.

### Quick Questions

- 1) What kind of mood might a director aim to create in Act One?
- 2) Suggest one way a costume designer could show that Brian is an outsider.
- 3) Why might a lighting designer choose to use red-tinted gels when Leah attempts to strangle herself in Act One?
- 4) Give two examples of diegetic sounds that might be used in Act Two ("A Wood").
- 5) Why might an actor playing Phil use physical contact when threatening Brian in Act Two?
- 6) How might an actor show Leah's excitement about her déjà vu in Act Two?
- 7) Why might a costume designer choose to make the wound on Adam's head stand out?
- 8) What effect would be created by Leah standing at a distance from Phil at the end of Act Three ("A Wood")?
- 9) Give one way an actor playing Richard might use vocal skills to create a mood of despair in Act Four.

### In-depth Questions

- 1) Describe a set design for the street in Act One, then explain how this set would change in Act Four. Explain the effect of these changes on the audience.
- 2) In Act One ("A Wood"), Jan and Mark describe what happened to Adam. How might the actor playing Jan use vocal skills to reveal information about her character here?
- 3) Choose a moment from Act Two. Explain how sound could be used to create a particular atmosphere at this moment.
- 4) How could an actor playing Leah use physical skills to help create a climax to the tension at the end of Act Three ("A Wood")?
- 5) Explain how lighting could be used to create a bleak mood in Act Four ("A Field").

## Practice Questions

This is it, the last set of exam-style questions. By now you should be a DNA expert, so pull on your lab coat and get that microscope ready. (Wait, sorry, wrong revision guide.) To practise what you've learnt about the play and about the molecules that carry genetic information, write some smashing answers to the questions below.

### Exam-style Questions

Read Act One ("A Wood") from where Mark says "It's Adam. He's..." to where John Tate says "Dead. He's dead", then answer Questions 1 and 2 below.

- 1) As a sound designer working on a production of *DNA*, describe how you would use sound to enhance the production of this extract.

- 2) Discuss how a performer playing Mark could communicate key aspects of his character to the audience in this extract. You should consider Mark's motivations and how the actor could use vocal and physical skills.

Read Act Three ("A Field") from the stage direction "*PHIL sits with a bag*" to "*Irritated he puts it carefully away*", then answer Questions 3 and 4.

- 3) As a performer playing the role of Phil, discuss how you would use physical skills to portray him in this extract. You should explain why your ideas are suitable for this extract and for the play as a whole.

- 4) Imagine you are a designer working on *DNA*. Explain how you would use props and stage furniture to portray this extract effectively on stage to the audience. You should refer to the play's context in your answer.

Read Act Three ("A Wood") from where Leah says "What happened" to where Adam says "I'm... dead?", then answer Question 5.

- 5) Imagine you are a director creating a production of *DNA*. Discuss how the performer playing Adam might convey Adam's state of mind in this extract. You should consider the performer's use of physical skills, vocal skills and stage space.

## About the Exam

If you're reading this book, you're going to write about *DNA* in your exam. Thankfully, this section is full of brilliant exam tips and sample answers to help you prepare for the big day. Take a deep breath and read on...

### 'DNA' will be assessed in a written exam

- 1) One section of your exam will require you to answer questions on *DNA*. The questions will either focus on an extract, or an extract and the play as a whole. In some cases, you can choose an extract yourself.
- 2) For this part of the exam, you'll be assessed on your knowledge of how the play could be produced and performed.
- 3) There will be both short-answer and long-answer questions. Manage your time carefully so you have plenty of time to write the longer answers — if a question is worth twice the marks of another, you should spend twice as long on it.

Make sure you read the exam paper carefully and answer all the questions about 'DNA'.

### You'll have to come up with ideas of how to produce 'DNA'

- 1) The questions could ask you to write about how a performer, designer or director may do something:
  - You'll need to think about how a **PERFORMER** might use performance skills to portray a certain character. This could include physical skills and vocal skills.
  - You'll need to come up with **DESIGN** ideas that would enhance the impact of the play. This requires a good understanding of design elements like set, lighting and sound.
  - You'll need to consider how a **DIRECTOR** would bring the written text to life on stage. You'll be asked to focus on one element of the production in your answer.
- 2) Some questions tell you which aspects of performance or design to write about, or you might be allowed to choose. You may be given options to choose from — e.g. set, lighting or sound.
- 3) You can't just learn about the roles and responsibilities of one type of theatre maker — over the course of the written exam, you might be expected to answer questions about all three aspects of production.

### You'll always need to write about certain aspects

- 1) No matter which aspect you're writing about, there are some general points you'll need to consider:
  - Kelly's intentions and what he wants to convey — stage directions are useful for this.
  - How the play's historical, social, cultural and theatrical contexts might affect a production.
  - The roles and responsibilities of theatre makers and how they bring the play to life, as well as any challenges they may face.
  - The genre and style of the play. You should explore how these can be conveyed to the audience.
  - The desired effect of a production on the audience, as well as how this effect might be created.
- 2) To get top marks in the exam, you should also:
  - Use accurate technical language when describing performance skills and design features.
  - Use examples (e.g. quotes and context) to show understanding of the play and support your points.
  - Give specific, detailed suggestions on how you could perform, design or direct a production — this will help the examiner to visualise your ideas.

# About the Exam

## Read the extract carefully before you begin

1) Most of the exam questions about DNA will ask you to refer to an extract, so make sure you've fully understood it before you start writing.

2) Some questions will also ask you to write about the play as a whole, so you'll need to relate your ideas about how to stage the extract to other ideas or events in the play.

3) Read each question carefully, then read through the extract. Think about what happens before and after the extract to help you work out how it fits in with the rest of the play. Highlight any important words or phrases (including stage directions). You might also want to annotate the extract as you go along.

4) For shorter answers, you should start writing as soon as you feel comfortable with the extract. But for longer answers, you should plan out a few key ideas for your answers.

You could do this by jotting down some bullet points or making a quick diagram (see p.68).

5) Your answer should be coherent — not just a list of different possibilities for the extract. For example, if you start writing about a naturalistic approach, don't swap to a non-naturalistic one halfway through. A good plan will help to make sure your ideas flow and are well-structured.

If you're sitting the Eduqas exam, the question might also ask you to choose a scene from the play to write about.

## Shorter answers should be concise

Remember that you shouldn't spend too much time on short-answer questions that aren't worth many marks — your answers will need to be snappy and straight to the point. Have a look at this example:

Imagine you are playing Richard in a production of *DNA*. Give three examples of physical skills that you would use to portray Richard in Act One ("A Wood"). Give reasons for your suggestions.

The first sentence directly addresses the question.

At the start of Act One ("A Wood"), when Richard stands up to John Tate, I would stand very upright, raise my chin and clench my fists. This would make Richard look defiant. However, the stage directions state that Richard moves towards John Tate "a little hesitantly", so I would move slowly and drag my feet slightly. This would communicate Richard's wariness of John Tate to the audience. John Tate responds aggressively to Richard's resistance, which causes Richard to back down. At this point, I would bow my head and avoid eye contact with John Tate when he says "Have you got a side now, Richard?" This would make Richard seem submissive.

Every suggestion should be clearly explained to the examiner.

The answer refers to precise moments in the extract.

EXAM TIP

## Manage your time carefully in the exam...

The questions will be worth different marks in the exam. Make sure you don't spend all your time on questions that are worth fewer marks — plan ahead for roughly how long you should spend on each one.

## Sample Question and Answer

For the higher-mark questions in the exam, you'll have to write longer answers and explain your ideas in plenty of detail. These two pages show you what an exam answer about performance might look like.

### Here's a sample question about performance

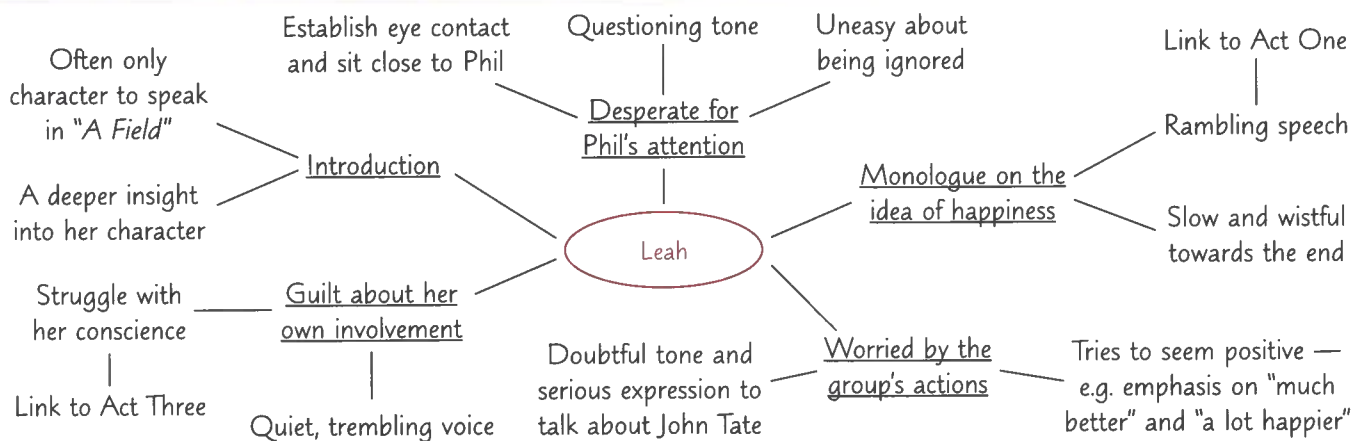
Here's what a long question about performance might look like:

Find the part of Act Two where Leah talks to Phil about happiness. Read from where Leah says "**Are you happy?**" to where she says "**What have we done, Phil?**", then answer the question below.

Imagine you're playing Leah in a production of *DNA*. As a performer, discuss how you might convey key aspects of Leah's character to the audience in this extract and the play as a whole. You should consider physical skills, vocal skills and interactions with other characters.

If you're sitting the Edexcel exam, the extract will be printed in your exam paper. If you're sitting the Eduqas exam, you'll be told which pages to read from your copy of the play.

### Here's how you could plan your answer...



### ... and here's how you could write it

Keep your introduction brief and focused on the question.

The scenes that take place in "A Field" provide the audience with an insight into Leah's character, because she's usually the only person to speak. In this extract, Leah's monologue reveals several key aspects of her character, including her feelings about Phil, her anxiety about the group's actions and her sense of guilt.

You can quote stage directions, but you should add your own ideas to them.

Throughout the whole extract, I would choose to show that Leah is desperate for Phil's attention. I would convey this to the audience by sitting in close proximity to Phil and trying to make eye contact with him at key moments. I would speak with rising intonation at the end of lines like "Isn't it Phil? Phil?" to give Leah's speech a questioning tone. This would make it seem like she is inviting Phil to respond. However, Leah feels uneasy when Phil doesn't reply to her, which I would reflect using body language. I would sit cross-legged on the stage, but keep shuffling around to suggest that Leah is unable to make herself comfortable. The stage directions state that Leah is holding a "container", so I would also drum my fingers on it nervously.

This picks out one aspect of the character and explains how it might be performed.

# Sample Question and Answer



**I'll bet Phil didn't get full marks in his speaking exam...**  
 With the longer questions, it's tempting to write down every single idea you have, but this can make your answer pretty messy. Instead, make sure that all your points are relevant to what the question is asking.

Don't forget to say how you'd interact with the other performers.

Describe how the performance develops as the extract goes on.

Use short quotes to show which part of the extract you're referring to.

This considers the impact of your decisions on the audience.

This shows good awareness of the play as a whole.

The question asks you to write about physical and vocal skills.

Explain how your choices relate to the rest of the play.

Leah's visible anxiety would encourage the audience to feel sympathy for her, as well as drawing their attention to this important prop.

Leah starts her monologue by discussing the idea of happiness. Her speech at this point is somewhat garbled, so I would speak at a quick pace and only pause for breath occasionally to create the impression that Leah is rambling about the first thing that comes to mind. In Act One, she is similarly incoherent when she obsesses over Phil's opinion of her. As a result, my delivery of the Act Two extract would reinforce the audience's impression of Leah as a character who is prone to overthinking. In contrast, I would speak slowly and use a wistful tone of voice when Leah starts talking about the "happiest moment" in her life, as well as breaking eye contact with Phil and staring into the distance. This would suggest to the audience that Leah is picturing a simpler time before Adam's disappearance and wishing that she could go back to it, hinting that she already regrets the cover-up.

Leah's update on the other characters suggests that she wants to convince herself that their actions were justified. When she claims that "Everyone's happier" since Adam's disappearance, I would add emphasis to phrases like "much better" and "a lot happier", to show her determination to believe that their situation has improved.

I would also use a wide-eyed facial expression and a disbelieving tone of voice to say that Danny and Cathy are behaving like "old friends", as though Leah inwardly doubts that such changes are genuine. Leah's revelation that John Tate "won't come out of his room" casts further doubt on the idea that life has really improved for the group. To reflect this, I would pause for a long time before mentioning John Tate and use a serious facial expression. This would make Leah seem more doubtful and reinforce the sense that she was only speaking about the rest of the group in order to convince herself that their decision to cover up Adam's disappearance was acceptable.

At the end of the extract, it becomes even clearer to the audience that Leah feels guilty about the group's treatment of Adam. When she reveals that "Adam's parents were on the telly again last night", I would speak in a quiet, trembling voice to show that she is upset and afraid. I would also use regular phrasing to provide a contrast to Leah's babbled speech earlier in the extract. This would add further to the audience's impression that she is now being serious. When Phil "looks up", I would look at him hopefully, as though Leah expects him to show some sign of guilt that would indicate that he isn't as remorseless as she fears. However, I would hang my head and sag my shoulders when she realises that Phil is staying quiet, before saying "What have we done, Phil?" in a desperate tone. This would emphasise to the audience that Leah is struggling with her conscience. The audience may even interpret this as an early sign that she's losing patience with Phil and the rest of the group, foreshadowing her departure at the end of Act Three.

## Sample Question and Answer

You'll need to write about design as well as performance in your exam, so here's a sample answer that does just that. This answer takes the same extract as before and looks at it from the perspective of a designer.

### Here's a sample question about design

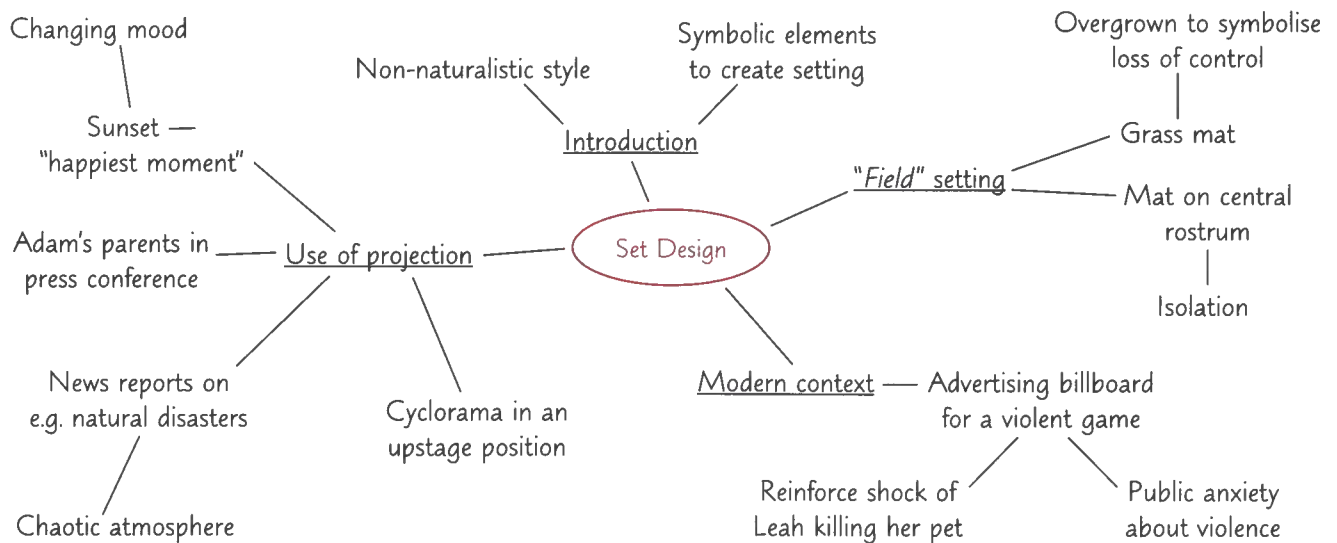
Here's what a long question about design might look like:

Find the part of Act Two where Leah talks to Phil about happiness. Read from where Leah says "**Are you happy?**" to where she says "**What have we done, Phil?**", then answer the question below.

Imagine you're a designer working on a production of *DNA*. Discuss how you would use **either** set design, lighting **or** sound to stage this extract effectively for the audience.

This question asks you to choose one design element, but you may be asked to write about multiple elements in the same answer if you're sitting the Eduqas exam.

### Here's how you could plan your answer...



### ... and here's how you could write it

Use the introduction to describe the overall effect you want to create.

When staging this extract, I would use symbolic elements to establish the setting and context of the extract. These elements would form part of a non-naturalistic style that would enhance the mood and atmosphere of the extract. The design would also highlight some of the key issues raised in the extract, including the nature of happiness, environmental change and public anxiety about violence among young people.

This extract is set in "A Field", so I would use an artificial grass mat to convey this setting. The grass would be longer and more ragged than in Act One; only "four days" have passed since the events of Act One, so this unnaturally rapid growth would symbolise the way that events are spiralling out of the group's control at this point in the play.

This describes the set design and justifies your choices.

# Sample Question and Answer

Leah's monologue about happiness creates a sense of isolation, so I would place the grass mat at a higher level to the rest of the stage using a centre rostrum to symbolise Leah and Phil's separation from society. This would enhance the impact of Leah's monologue about the loneliness of "pretending to be happy". I would further this effect by making the rostrum only just large enough for the two actors to sit on; this would mean that it was surrounded by lots of empty space, which would add to the impression that Leah and Phil are separated from the rest of the group and from society as a whole. This would add to the mood of loneliness.

As well as giving the audience a sense of place and enhancing the mood of the extract, my set design would reflect the play's 21st-century setting. To achieve this effect, I would paint a truck to look like a modern advertising billboard, which would be easy to wheel on and off stage. This would be placed in a upstage right position and on a lower level to Leah and Phil, so that the audience's focus remains on the characters. One of the most shocking moments of the extract is Leah's revelation that she killed her pet; to reinforce the violence of her action, the billboard would show an advert for a violent video game. This would remind the audience of public anxiety about violence among young people, prompting them to think more deeply about the answer to Leah's question, "Why do you think I did that?"

Having established the setting and context, I would use projection to enhance the impact of important moments during Leah's monologue. For example, I would project a silent montage of news reports about climate change and natural disasters on a cyclorama behind the actors when Leah talks about "polluting the natural order". These rapidly changing images would create a chaotic atmosphere and add to the sense of anxiety created by Leah's concerns about the "fragility of reality". I would use the projector again when Leah says that Adam's parents were "on the telly". At this point, I would show a video in the style of a press conference with two actors playing Adam's parents grieving and appealing for information. This would suggest that Leah saw this clip on television and cannot get it out of her mind, which would emphasise her guilty conscience to the audience.

I would also use projection to change the atmosphere of the scene. For example, the mood briefly becomes lighter when Leah talks about her "happiest moment". At this point, I would project a still image of the sun setting over a generic town onto the cyclorama. The warm oranges and pinks would reflect Leah's happiness as she remembers the moment, and use colour symbolism to create a sense of romance. When Phil doesn't respond to Leah's question about whether he remembers the sunset, the screen would abruptly go black to reflect her sense of disappointment. This would also emphasise the bleak mood created by Leah's next sentence: her admission that she has killed her pet.

Show that you've thought about the whole extract.

Use quotes to indicate when certain effects would be used.

This shows an understanding of the context.

Always refer back to the effect on the audience.

Explain your design ideas using accurate technical terms.

This shows that you've considered some of the play's later messages.

Important where design stage.



**I assume Leah's got a separate container for her lunch...** When you're writing about design, it's important to give lots of detail in your answers. Clearly explain how you'd achieve the effects you want and use technical terms when describing what you would do.



# Glossary

backstory	The events that have happened to a character <a href="#">before</a> the action of the play.
blackout	When the <a href="#">stage lights</a> are <a href="#">turned off</a> between scenes or at the end of a performance.
blocking	The process of <a href="#">positioning</a> the actors on stage and planning their <a href="#">movements</a> to maintain <a href="#">good sightlines</a> for the <a href="#">audience</a> .
body language	The way <a href="#">movements</a> , <a href="#">posture</a> and <a href="#">gestures</a> can show how someone feels <a href="#">without speaking</a> .
'Broken Britain'	A phrase used by the media and politicians in the early 21st century to describe a British society in which people acted for <a href="#">themselves</a> rather than in a <a href="#">socially responsible</a> way.
character arc	The way a character <a href="#">changes</a> over the course of a story.
climax	The <a href="#">turning point</a> in a play, where <a href="#">tension</a> is at its <a href="#">highest</a> .
comedy	A genre of drama which features <a href="#">humour</a> and a <a href="#">happy ending</a> .
convention	A feature of <a href="#">staging</a> , <a href="#">design</a> or <a href="#">performance</a> that is associated with a particular style or time.
cyclorama	A <a href="#">curved screen</a> at the back of the stage which can have scenery <a href="#">projected</a> onto it.
déjà vu	The feeling of having <a href="#">done</a> or <a href="#">seen</a> something <a href="#">before</a> .
diction	The <a href="#">quality</a> (or clarity) of a performer's <a href="#">vocal expression</a> .
diegetic sound	A sound that <a href="#">can be heard</a> by the <a href="#">characters</a> in a play.
DNA	A complex <a href="#">chemical</a> found in all living organisms. It carries <a href="#">genetic information</a> .
dramatic irony	When the audience <a href="#">knows</a> something that the characters <a href="#">don't</a> .
duologue	A <a href="#">scene</a> or <a href="#">section of dialogue</a> which only involves <a href="#">two actors</a> .
end-on stage	A <a href="#">proscenium arch</a> stage <a href="#">without</a> the <a href="#">arch</a> to frame it.
flat	A <a href="#">wooden frame</a> with <a href="#">canvas</a> stretched over it which is <a href="#">painted</a> and used as <a href="#">scenery</a> .
floodlight	A type of stage lantern which casts a <a href="#">broad</a> wash of light onto the stage.
fourth wall	The <a href="#">imaginary barrier</a> that separates the <a href="#">audience</a> from the world of the play <a href="#">on stage</a> .
Fresnel spotlight	A type of stage lantern which casts a <a href="#">beam</a> with a <a href="#">softly defined edge</a> .
gel	A piece of <a href="#">coloured</a> , <a href="#">heat-resistant</a> , <a href="#">plastic film</a> used to <a href="#">change</a> the <a href="#">colour</a> of a lantern's <a href="#">beam</a> .
genre	The <a href="#">type of story</a> a play is telling (e.g. <a href="#">comedy</a> , <a href="#">tragedy</a> ).
gesture	A <a href="#">movement</a> made by <a href="#">part of the body</a> (e.g. arms, head) to convey a character's <a href="#">emotions</a> .
gobo	A <a href="#">thin</a> , <a href="#">metal disc</a> with <a href="#">shapes</a> cut into it which can be slotted into a lantern to <a href="#">project patterns</a> or <a href="#">images</a> onto the <a href="#">stage</a> or a <a href="#">backdrop</a> .
incidental music	Any <a href="#">music</a> which <a href="#">accompanies</a> a performance and is used to create <a href="#">mood</a> or <a href="#">tension</a> .
intonation	The <a href="#">rise</a> and <a href="#">fall</a> of a performer's <a href="#">voice</a> to create a <a href="#">natural</a> pattern of speech.
in-yr-face theatre	A genre of theatre which uses <a href="#">shocking</a> or <a href="#">violent</a> means to convey a <a href="#">serious message</a> .
lighting rig	A <a href="#">structure</a> above the stage and wings which <a href="#">holds</a> the <a href="#">stage lanterns</a> .
linear structure	A plot structure where the events on stage happen in <a href="#">chronological order</a> .
minimalist set	A <a href="#">basic set</a> that uses <a href="#">minimal</a> scenery and <a href="#">very few</a> props.

monologue	A speech made by one character, either to another character or to the audience.
naturalism	A style of theatre which tries to recreate real life on stage as closely as possible.
non-diegetic sound	A sound that can't be heard by the characters in the play.
parcan	A stage lantern that can produce an intense and adjustable beam.
phrasing	The way a character's dialogue is broken up into sections when spoken by an actor.
physical theatre	A non-naturalistic style of theatre which uses physical movements to tell stories.
plot device	Something (or someone) that is only included in the play to move the plot forward.
posture	The position a character holds themselves in when sitting or standing.
profile spotlight	A type of stage lantern that produces a sharply defined beam. These lanterns are used to focus on a particular character or part of the stage.
promenade theatre	A style of theatre that requires the audience to follow the actors between different performance spaces over the course of the play. This usually takes place outdoors.
prop	An item on stage that the characters can interact with.
proscenium arch stage	A box-shaped stage that is set back from the audience so that only the front end is open to them.
proxemics	The use of the physical space between the actors on stage to create meaning.
revolving stage	A stage or part of a stage which can spin around.
rostrum (plural rostra)	A raised platform which is used to introduce different levels to the stage.
soundscape	A collection of individual sounds that are layered up to create a strong sense of place.
split staging	When the stage is split into different areas representing different places or times.
stage directions	Any instructions written in a script by the playwright to explain how a play should be performed.
stage furniture	Any moveable object on stage which isn't a costume, a prop or a part of the scenery.
strobe	A type of stage lantern which rapidly flashes on and off.
structure	The shape of a play's narrative, including the order in which it's shown to the audience.
style	The way in which a director chooses to interpret a performance text on stage.
symbolism	The use of props, gestures, settings, lighting, etc. to represent other things and create meaning.
tableau	A moment in a performance when the action stops and the characters freeze in position.
theatre in the round	A style of staging which seats the audience on all sides of a central stage.
thrust stage	A stage which extends out into the audience, so that they're standing or sitting on three sides.
tragedy	A genre of play which features a serious plot and an unhappy ending.
traverse stage	A long, narrow stage which runs between the audience, who face the stage on both sides.
truck	A structure on wheels which can be painted on both sides and used as scenery.
uplighting	When the stage is lit from below to create an unusual or unsettling effect.
wings	The space to the side of a stage which is used for storage and as a waiting area for the actors.

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# The Characters in 'DNA'

Look at this lovely bunch. You should be familiar with them and the play by now, but if you want a recap, read on for the critically acclaimed DNA — *The Cartoon*. (Probably not coming to cinemas anytime soon).



Leah



Phil



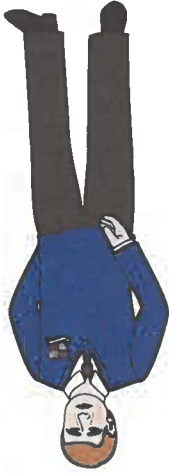
Adam



After the bullying



Cathy



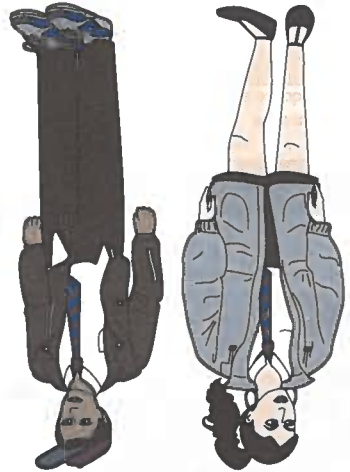
Brian



Richard



John Tate



Jan and Mark



Lou



Danny