

Green Thumb Theatre

CRAZY ed

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 

Teachers Notes
HOUSE: ED 09

SUITABILITY
Years 7 – 12

DATES
August 18 – 20

Introduction



A. Introduction

These teacher's notes have been designed to assist you with classroom preparation and extension work in relation to the production of *Cranked*. We hope that this resource will assist you to further enjoy your performing arts experience back in the classroom. The activities are designed for students from Years 7-12. Drama educator Mathew Clausen, has prepared the notes.

Included in these notes are a number of activities that you can use with your students. These activities provide an opportunity for students to explore the broad themes and style of the performance.

Syllabi written by NSW Board of Studies have been used as a guide for the planning of these activities. You should consider rephrasing the questions and activities to suit the particular terminology, curriculum foci and outcomes used in your school.

Some websites are suggested in this kit. It is recommended that before setting activities based on these, that teachers first visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school setting.

B. Classroom Context and Curriculum Links

The activities provided in these notes provide extension and enrichment work in a range of curriculum areas including English, Drama, Music and PDHPE. The production of *Cranked*, offers many valuable opportunities for educators to integrate themes, issues and performance style and techniques into a range of classroom topics and units of work. These notes suggest ways in which you might address the themes of addiction, relationships and the consequences of individual choices addressed in the production *Cranked*. The suggested activities also provide practical teaching strategies to help your students experiment with some aspects of the performance style including rap and freestyle, solo performance and the use of autobiographical material for performance work. The activities are also designed to develop student knowledge and understanding of the dangers of crystal meth use and other illicit drugs.

Introduction Continued

C. Performance Event Description and Synopsis

Cranked examines the rising epidemic of crystal meth use by young people. In this hip-hop monodrama, Stan who has adopted the moniker of "definition", raps a personal narrative that reflects on the impact of crystal addiction on the life of a talented and potentially famous freestyle MC.

The performance begins as Stan prepares for an upcoming freestyle competition. In the moments before he sets foot on stage, he confronts the demons of his past that still threaten to destroy his dreams and ambitions. His recollections of the events leading to and during his crystal meth addiction bring back glimpses of his loss of self and his deterioration into theft and poverty. Images from his beloved horror films meld with his drug-induced hallucinations in a swirl of images, sounds, and pain.

Your students can preview the production, *Cranked* by viewing the clip available on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=CA&hl=en&v=bL-FNzleyy4>

Pre Performance

Activity 1 - Theatre Company Research



Curriculum Links
English/Drama

1.1 The following website provides information about Green Thumb Theatre. Ask your students to complete a research exercise about the company by visiting the following website and answering following questions:

Green Thumb Theatre

<http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca/>

1. Where is Green Thumb Theatre located?
2. Who is the target audience?
3. What is the main goal or mission of Green Thumb Theatre?
4. Visit the link that lists the plays for the current 2009-2010 season. Read about two productions and report on the themes and stories in these plays.
5. Open the links to the Green Thumb Theatre blog and Facebook pages. Read and report on what shows are currently touring and where they have been performing.

1.2 Ask your students to read the following reviews of *Cranked*. Hold a class discussion about the information in the reviews. Ask the class to report back on the opinions of the reviewers and what their expectations are of the performance.

Variety - Review of Cranked

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117939313.html?categoryid=33&cs=1>

Theatre Mania - Review of Cranked

http://www.theatermania.com/off-broadway/reviews/01-2009/cranked_16877.html

New York Times - Review of Cranked

<http://theater2.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/theater/reviews/20crank.html>

Pre Performance

Activity Two - Drugs of Addiction



Curriculum Links

English/Drama/PDHPE

2.1 In this activity your students will research the impact of drugs of addiction. These activities directly support the PDHPE syllabus and outcomes related to individual health, choices and the effects of risk. More advanced information on this topic can be found at the following website:

Australian Drug Foundation

<http://www.adf.org.au/>

2.2 Ask your students to visit the following websites and provide information on the nature of crystal meth and the short term and long-term effects on the individual. Ask your students to report back to the class. Encourage discussion on the reasons why people might want to use crystal, what the negative consequences of use might be and how to deal with situations where crystal is available or on offer.

United States Department of Justice - Crystal Meth (Note: this site contains strong images of the effects of Crystal Meth use)

<http://www.usdoj.gov/methawareness/>

UNSW-National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

[http://notes.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resources/NDARCFact_Drugs7/\\$file/ICE+FACT+SHEET+2.pdf](http://notes.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resources/NDARCFact_Drugs7/$file/ICE+FACT+SHEET+2.pdf)

2.3 Ask your students to visit the following website:

Headspace

<http://www.headspace.org.au/home/>

This site is a federally funded project aimed at a youth market. It is designed to provide information about a range of health issues. Ask your students to explore the various pages including the links to information on various illicit drugs and their effects. Ask them to compare the information they have already gathered with the information from this site.

Pre Performance

Activity Three - Solo Performance



Curriculum Links

PDHPE/English/ Drama

3.1 In this activity your students will practice skills in telling a personal story to the class. Once your students have explored the skills of solo performance, the final activity will allow them to explore the issues in *Cranked* as a group performance that includes moments of solo performance.

Firstly, ask the class to discuss what it is about the skills of a solo performer, rather than the content of the performance, that engages the audience. If your students have seen solo performance work, you might refer to this in your discussion. Guide the discussion by referring to strong examples of effective use of movement, gesture, facial expression, energy, articulation, projection and delivery including pitch, pace, tone, emphasis and rhythm.

3.2 Ask the class to divide into pairs. Each pair is to find somewhere in the room to work privately. Each person is to tell his or her partner a brief personal story. It is important that the story they tell is true. Ask the class to make sure that they listen carefully to the stories they hear as they will need to use what they hear in the next activity.

3.3 Ask the class to sit in a circle. Each person is to tell the story they heard to the class as though it was their story. This means they must speak in first person. They are also to heighten the telling of the story by standing and addressing the whole class. They will need to use more energy, a stronger voice and gestures to engage their audience. After everyone in the class has told their partner's story to the class, ask the owners of the stories to feedback on the detail that may or may not have been given in the re-telling of their stories.

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Activity Three - Solo Performance Continued

3.4 Find some short extracts from script work or monologues and distribute these to your students. Ask your students to prepare a performance of these pieces for the class. In their preparation, ask them to consider the following:

Information about the character that may be created by the student to create belief and conviction

1. Location - where is the character? What time of day is it? Etc.
2. The given circumstances - where has the character been =before this moment, what has happened to them? Where will they go after this moment?
3. Who the character is talking to? Sometimes the audience is spoken to as though they are a character rather than an audience in a theatre.
4. What the character wants to achieve by telling their story or speaking to the audience/ character.
5. How voice and movement can be manipulated to engage the audience.

3.5 This activity will require understanding some sophisticated ideas and might only be appropriate for senior students. It will also require significant preparation time to be completed well. You may need to refer back to the information covered in activity two and discuss the ways in which drugs and drug use impact on individuals and their relationships with others and their community.

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Each group is to create 1-2 minute solo performances for each group member that explores the allure and later consequences of drugs of addiction. For example, a group might create three characters, a son or daughter, an ambulance officer who deals with overdoses and drug related injuries and a family member or friend who wants to stop someone they know from using drugs. In their performance, each character will speak to the audience about their feelings and opinions on the impact of drug use. The group can add to their performance by using tableaux as background images that relate to the content of the characters monologues.

Post Performance

Activity Four - Performance Evaluation and Reflection



Curriculum Links
English/Drama

4.1 This activity is an opportunity for your students to share their responses to the performance. The questions provided cover all aspects of the performance and you are encouraged to select those questions that will be relevant for your students. The questions could also form a scaffold for written responses.

4.2 The following questions can be used as a guideline for a discussion or a written response to the performance:

1. Summarise the character Stan's personal story as told in *Cranked*.
2. What were some of the issues and/or themes covered in the performance?
3. What moments did you enjoy in the performance? Why?
4. How did the performer encourage you to believe in his character portrayal? Can you give an example of a moment when you found him especially convincing?
5. How the character's family background impact on his self image?
6. What were some of the rawer or disturbing moments in the performance? Why did these moments affect you strongly?
7. What did you like about the use lighting and projection in the performance?
8. What was the purpose of using rap and hip-hop to tell this story?
9. What messages were you left with at the end of the performance?
10. What improvements would you have made to the performance?

Post Performance

Activity Five - Rap

Curriculum Links

English/Drama/Music

5.1 Ask your students to prepare a written or oral report on the history of these music styles. Their report should include information about:

- The origins of rap and hip-hop.
- Significant developments and changes.
- Key creators and composers.
- Information as to how these music styles have influenced youth culture.

The following website is managed by Davey D, an experienced MC and hip-hop journalist. His syndicated radio program in the United States, Hard Knock Radio, deals with the politics and culture of Hip hop. Ask your students to visit this site and the pages related to the history of Hip-hop music.

Davey D's hip hop Daily News - <http://www.daveyd.com/>

5.2 In this activity ask your students to complete the following rap term table. When they have finished, ask them to check their answers at the:

Rap Dictionary.com

http://www.rapdict.org/Main_Page

(next page)

Activity Five - Rap Rap Definition Sheet

Rap Dictionary.com
http://www.rapdict.org/Main_Page

Rap Term	Meaning
Front/Fronting	
Ay yo trip	
chill	
sup	
G'd up	
marinate	
roll	
b-boy	
peeps	
Bling-bling	
tight	
D.O.A	
bug	
phat	
oreo	
wigger	
bima	
jiggy	
Play yourself	
def	
busta	
creep	
shorty	
tripping	
boo	
whodi	
player	

Activity Five - Rap Continued



5.3 Ask your students to prepare a short oral or written presentation on a hip-hop or R+B song of their choice. They may work individually or with a partner. Provide your students with the following guidelines for their presentation.

- Choose a hip-hop or R+B song that you like.
- Copy out or find a copy of the lyrics
- Find out some brief information about the artist.
- Listen to the song several times and think about the implied message of the lyrics.
- Explain the message of the song. Does it contain any irony or sarcasm?
- Identify any hooks, samples or other features of the song and explain why they are effective.

Our students can use the following website to find the lyrics to hundreds of hip-hop and rap songs.

The Original Hip hop Lyrics Archive

<http://www.ohhla.com/all.html>

5.4 Alternatively, you may want to select one song for the class. Once you have made your selection, play the song for your students while they read the lyrics. You may need to play the song a few times to allow the students time to appreciate music and lyrics. Encourage them to tap out the layers of rhythm in the song. The following points are guidelines for discussion:

- Who is the composer of the song?
- Who else creates the final product that is recorded on a CD and what are their roles and responsibilities?
- What additional information can you find about the context of the song that will help to explain its meaning?

Activity Five - Rap Continued

- What is the mood of the song?
- How do the lyrics communicate this?
- What images do the lyrics describe?
- What feelings do the lyrics describe?
- Are any metaphors or similes used?
- How are the music dynamics manipulated to create mood?
- Describe the texture of the music i.e. the layers of sound and their function, how voice and instrument is combined.
- Discuss the use of duration in the music. Comment on the ways in which beat, rhythm, meter, tempo are manipulated for a particular purpose.

When your students have completed their preparation, have a presentation session where they play one minute of their chosen song to the class and provide information about the song and the artist.

Post Performance

Activity Six - Writing and Performing Rap



Curriculum Links
English/Drama/Music

6.1 This activity can be completed individually or in small groups. Before students write their own rap they need to have a beat or rhythm to accompany their writing. The following Youtube links provide beats that your students can write raps to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vln1ervARgE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lnqZVJoJD8&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jn5RMwUyE3A&feature=related>

If you have the space, allow your students to move around the room stepping out one of these beats. There is no need to think of words for a rap at this point.

6.2 Once your students have listened to the rhythms, ask them to brainstorm ideas for issues of concern or interest to them. Their rap will be more effective if the subject matter is important to them. Allow your students time to develop their rap to the one of the beats provided or they may wish to use one of their own. Once everyone has finished a draft of their rap, ask for volunteers to perform their rap to the class.

6.3 Freestyle rap is an improvised version of rapping. You can find out more about freestyling at the following link:

Wikipedia: Freestyle Rap

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freestyle_rap

If you have taught improvisation to your class as a drama topic, remind them of the relevant skills of improvisation; to make offers, be spontaneous, advance and extend. The following website is designed for teachers and students of freestyling. It provides some excellent advice for novice freestylers. You may wish to go over some of the tips before your students practice freestyling:

Flocabulary - Hip Hop in the Classroom

<http://www.flocabulary.com/freestylrap.html>

6.4 Use one of the beats provided in activity 6.1. Ask the class to stand in a circle. As the beat plays, each person in the group is to improvise four lines of rap. Encourage our students to be spontaneous and to have fun. Now divide the class into pairs. Each pair is to improvise rap together by alternating four lines at a time. You can turn this into a mock 'battle' by having the pairs try to outdo each other in a freestyling competition.

Post Performance

Activity Seven - Urban Poetry

Curriculum Links

English/Drama

In this activity your students will write poetry that expresses their response to the performance *Cranked* and the related issues and themes. Revise with the students some of the poetry devices like alliteration, assonance, rhyme, repetition, metaphor, and simile.

7.1 Ask your students to discuss or write down the issues or concerns that they have about illegal drugs in society and the problems and issues for young people. They might complete this activity individually, in pairs or as a whole class discussion.

7.2 Provide your students with examples of poems that explore personal experience. The following websites provide a mixture of classical poems and contemporary self-published poems. You will need to be selective as the quality of the poems and the suitability of the subject matter varies in each site:

The Urban Poetry Project

<http://www.urbanpoetry.net/UrbanPoets.html>

The Poetry Searcher

<http://www.glaced.digitalspace.net/>

Find Poetry.Com

<http://www.findpoetry.com/>

7.3 Ask your students to write their poem and publish them for others to read. They might also want to set their poem to a rap beat as part of their class presentation.

References

Author	Title	Web Address	Date
Australian Drug Foundation	Preventing Drug Problems	http://www.adf.org.au/	May, 2009
Australian Government	Headspace	http://www.headspace.org.au/home/	May, 2009
Davey D	Davey D's hip-hop Daily News	http://www.daveyd.com/	June, 2009
Find Poetry.Com	Search Poetry	http://www.findpoetry.com/	June, 2009
Flocabulary.com	HipHop in the Classroom	http://www.flocabulary.com/freestylrap.html	June, 2009
Glaced digital space.net	The Poetry Searcher	http://www.glaced.digitalspace.net/	June, 2009
Green Thumb Theatre	Green Thumb Theatre	http://www.greenthumb.bc.ca/	May, 2009
Ohhla.com	The Original Hip hop Lyrics Archive	http://www.ohhla.com/all.html	June, 2009
Rapdict.org	Rap Dictionary.com	http://www.rapdict.org/Main_Page	June, 2009
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UNSW	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre	http://notes.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resources/NDARCFact_Drugs7/\$file/ICE+FACT+SHEET+2.pdf	June, 2009
Van Gelder, L.	New York Times – Review of Cranked	http://theater2.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/theater/reviews/20crank.html	June, 2009
Wikipedia	Freestyle Rap	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freestyle_rap	June, 2009