

# hairspray

SECONDARY EDUCATION PACK -

## DRAMA LESSON PLANS



These lesson plans are designed as a starting point for curriculum-based activities for students in Key Stage 3. All activities can be developed to suit Key Stage 4 students.

# EXAMINING DISCRIMINATION

## OBJECTIVE:

To explore what it means to be 'different'. To examine the insignificance of visual differences, and experience what it feels like to be treated differently because of arbitrary factors.

## WARM UPS

### BIG, BLONDE, BEAUTIFUL

Named after Motormouth Maybelle's fabulous song of the same name, this warm up is a great ice breaker and encourages focus.

Ask the group to stand in a circle, with you in the centre. As the facilitator, you will spin around the circle and choose one person who you will point to. At this stage, you will either say "Big, Blonde, Beautiful" or just simply "Beautiful". Instruct the players that if you point to them and say "Big, Blonde, Beautiful" then they must respond by saying "Beautiful" before you finish your sentence. If you point to them and simply say "Beautiful" then they must stay completely silent. Keep spinning around the circle, pointing at new players until someone trips up. If a player doesn't manage to say "Beautiful" before you get to the end of your sentence, or fails to stay completely silent when you say "Beautiful" then they are out and must sit down. Continue playing until you have a winner.



### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

This warm up aims to make the group question the impact of visual differences, and question how much significance they really have.

Divide your group into two and ask both groups to stand in a line, facing each other. Tell both groups they have ninety seconds to really take in everything about the other group's appearance. When the ninety seconds is up, one group (the observers) should leave the room. The group remaining should change ten things about their appearance. This could be anything from someone pulling up a sock, removing glasses, putting hair into a ponytail etc. Instruct the group that the changes must be visible, changes to things in pockets etc will not count. When the observers return, give them another ninety seconds to work out the changes that have been made. Reverse the groups and repeat the exercise.

Have the group discuss how difficult it was to spot the differences each time.

### THIS IS ME

This physical warm up will get the group moving, and introduces them to the idea of similarities and differences.

Have the class sit in a circle on chairs. If chairs aren't available, make sure each person's place is marked by something physical such as a coat or a bag. There should be one less place in the circle than the number of people playing the game. One member of the group should stand in the middle of the circle and call out something generic about themselves. This could be "I have blonde hair", "I like football", "I have a sister", "My birthday is in January", etc. Everyone else in the group who has this in common with the first person must get up and swap seats with another player in circle. Players who don't share this in common will remain seated. The aim is for the first person to steal a player's seat, and for a new person to be left stuck in the middle. No player can return to the same seat they started their go in. Play is repeated numerous times.

When the game runs its natural course, ask the group how it feels to be stuck in the middle. Were there any instances where the person in the middle said something, and no one else in the room stood up? How did this make them feel? How did it feel when you said something about yourself and other people in the room stood up because it applied to them as well?

Although this game should not concentrate on personal traits, it begins to introduce the idea of what it can feel like to be different.



## EXERCISE

At its core, *Hairspray* is a show that examines prejudices and how people are treated differently because of the way they look.

Tracy is turned away by the producers and sponsors on the *Corny Collins* show for having a different body shape to their typical dancers. Seaweed, Ines and their friends are not allowed the same privileges as the white dancers on the show. They must only dance with other black dancers, and only get exposure on television once a month on “negro day”.

With the group sitting on the floor, ask everyone to fold their arms. Split the group in two, based on which arm they fold over the top. People with left arm on top should go to one side of the room, people with the right arm on top to the opposite side. The group has been divided by an arbitrary factor based on an involuntary decision they each made. Label one half of your group ‘A’, and the other half ‘B’.

Ask the class to walk around the room on their own, filling all the spaces. Explain that everyone in the room is equal. They are all extremely successful, wealthy and respected individuals. They own everything in the room, and love how successful they are. As they greet each other, ask them to make their confidence evident to each other. They might choose to high five, cheer or celebrate as they walk around and greet their peers.

Stop the group, and explain to them they now own very little in the room. They are not successful and they know that no one in the room respects them. Every member of the room must keep one hand on their heart, so they only have one arm and hand to use in the activity. Ask them to continue to walk around the room and greet each other, but show how it feels to believe no one in the room respects you. How does this affect the way they greet each other?

Stop the group again, and tell the ‘A’s to continue as the respected group, and ‘B’s as the non-respected group. Ask them to mingle, but insist that the ‘A’s must not acknowledge the ‘B’s. Ensure ‘B’s keep one hand on their heart to differentiate them from the ‘A’s. Let the group continue to walk around like this for 3-4 minutes, giving them a chance to really begin to see how it feels.

Once you have stopped the group, lead a discussion in how the activity felt once the group was divided.

- How did it feel to be an ‘A’?
- How did you feel about the ‘B’s? Was it easy to ignore them?
- How did it feel to be a ‘B’?
- What was the impact of keeping your hand on your heart?
- How did you feel about the ‘A’s?

# STILL IMAGERY

## OBJECTIVE:

To understand the difference between naturalistic and abstract imagery, and their use as performance techniques and explorative strategies.



## EXERCISE

Ask the group to think about the key characters in Hairspray, and their relationships with self-confidence. Opposite are a couple of quotes from, or about each character to use as a guide.

There are nine characters listed below. Split the class into groups of nine or less, and ask the groups to assign a different character to each pupil. It doesn't matter if groups don't include all characters. Once in groups, they can use the quotations below, or any of their own ideas to form an idea about each character, and their relationship with self-confidence.

Once all groups have discussed the characters they are using, ask them all to form a line. The character with the least self-confidence should be placed at one end, and the character with the most self-confidence at the other.

Explain to the groups that they are now going to create two contrasting frozen images, or "freeze frames".

The first freeze frame should be naturalistic. Ask the groups to create a still image to portray a situation that could have occurred between these characters. Things to consider when creating a naturalistic freeze frame might include:

- Body language
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Gesture
- Positioning of the characters
- What story the image is telling, and how this is portrayed

The second freeze frame should be abstract. Instead of trying to tell a story with the image, the groups should concentrate on physicalising the emotions of their characters. In this image, not all characters need to be portrayed. The group might choose to concentrate on one or two characters, with pupils experimenting with their involvement in the image to represent emotions, status or relationships. Things to consider when creating an abstract freeze frame might include:

- The use of height and levels
- Using symbolic gestures to highlight character's relationships
- Exaggeration of body language and facial expressions
- Symmetry or creating a symbolic structure for their image

Once all groups have created their two freeze frames, take it in turns for each group to show their images to the whole class. Discuss with the group the effects of the contrasting images, and what the benefits of each might be. Points to discuss could include:

- The use of images to storyboard an idea
- Using still imagery to explore character relationships
- How physicalising emotion can be used to explore new depths when creating a character
- How effective a single image can be in explaining information to an audience, both simply and quickly
- When naturalistic or abstract imagery might be used as a performance technique, and what the effect on the audience might be
- When naturalistic imagery might be used as an explorative strategy, and what the effect on the performers might be



**TRACY:** ‘Corny Collins is hosting the sophomore hop tomorrow night. If he saw me dancing like this with you, maybe he’d put me on his show.’

*Act one, scene four.*

‘But someday I hope to be the first woman president of the world or a Rockette. You got to think big to be big!’

*Act one, scene five.*

**EDNA:** ‘They don’t put people like us on television – except to be laughed at.’

*Act one, scene one.*

‘I’m sorry, Tracy. But no one said anything about me appearing on television. I’m sorry but I simply cannot appear on television at my present weight.’

*Act one, scene nine.*

**PENNY:** ‘Ohmigod! It’s a dream of a lifetime. I have to go watch you audition.’

*Act one, scene one.*

‘I’m Penny Lou Pingleton and I’m very pleased and scared to be here.’

*Act one, scene nine.*

**SEAWEED:** ‘The man can dine me on a diet of detention so long as he don’t starve me of my tunes.’

*Act one, scene four.*

‘I call this one ‘Peyton Place After Midnight.’ I use it to attract the opposite sex.’

*Act one, scene four.*

**LINK:** Velma talking about Link – ‘And Link, stop hogging the camera; you’re not Elvis yet.’

*Act one, scene one.*

‘I’ve been singing and dancing and smiling on that show for three years waiting for it to lead to my break. You’ve got everything; brains, talent, personality. Me? I’ve got one chance to get seen nationwide.’

*Act one, scene nine.*

**AMBER:** Velma talking to Amber – ‘Your dancing was atrocious today, Amber. I’m willing to lie, cheat and steal to win you that Miss Hairspray crown, but you’ve got to work with me.’

*Act one, scene one.*

‘Thank you ladies, gentlemen and kids. I’m now ready to consume the title of Miss Teenage Hairspray.’

*Act two, scene five.*

**MOTORMOUTH:** ‘You can’t let weight restrict your fate! Look at me! I’m on TV!’

*Act one, scene nine.*

‘I’m big, blonde and beautiful and there is nothing about me that’s unsuitable.’

*Act one, scene nine.*

**WILBUR:** ‘Then you go for it! This is America, babe. You gotta think big to be big.’

*Act one, scene one.*

‘I’m not leaving here without my daughter.’

*Act two, scene one.*

**VELMA:** ‘My, how this town has gone downhill since I was crowned Miss Baltimore Crabs.’

*Act one, scene three.*

‘Bang your drum, Bonzo. No one cares. Don’t get any more cute ideas about protesting or even showing up at the special. I’ll have armed guards surrounding the Eventorium to make sure Tracy can’t get within 100 miles of that place. Game, set, match.’

*Act two, scene one.*

