

Titus

By Jan Sobrie

English version by Oliver Emanuel, directed by Lu Kemp

Information for schools



Produced by:

 **RED BRIDGE**
www.redbridgearts.co.uk

Perth Schools tour produced in partnership with Perth Theatre and macrobert arts centre

Information for Teachers

Thank you for booking Titus for your school. This pack will tell you what to expect on the day and gives you some additional information about the production.

Contents:

- About the production
- What to expect on the day
- Themes and issues to be aware of
- Follow up activities
- Useful information and resources

About the Production

Titus is a one-actor show that tells the story of a 10 year-old boy on the edge – literally on the roof of his school – confronted by a situation that seems hopeless. He can either give up or fight.

Titus was originally written by Belgian writer Jan Sobrie, was awarded the Dutch-German Author Prize in 2007 and is considered one of Europe’s most successful plays for young people. This English version, written by Oliver Emanuel and directed by Lu Kemp, premiered at the Imagine Festival, Edinburgh in May 2012.

*“A fantastic piece for older children....(and) anyone who appreciates great theatre” **** The Times*

*“A beautifully structured, evocatively phrased monologue” **** The Herald*

Winner of The People's Choice Victor Award 2015

Writer	Jan Sobrie
English version writer	Oliver Emanuel
Performer	Gavin Jon Wright
Director	Lu Kemp
Stage Manager	Avalon Hernandez
Producer	Red Bridge Arts

English version originally co-produced with macrobert arts centre, Stirling

What to expect on the Day:

Titus is a one-actor show with a minimal set.

The show has a running time of 40 minutes. There is no interval or break.

In schools Titus is performed in a classroom for one class. The performance includes an element of surprise for the pupils who should not be told anything about the class 'visitor'.

The actor will come into a classroom mid lesson and take up position ideally on the teacher's desk, or a sturdy desk at the front of the classroom. He stands on the edge of the desk and delivers his monologue from there. At the end of the performance he steps off the table, leaves and a fish is thrown into the classroom (by the stage manager).

Usually the teacher's desk, or a pupil's desk is sturdy enough. The stage manager and performer will check the desk prior to performing.

Get in:

Ideally the performer and technician will see the classroom, without pupils before the performance, this can be before schools starts or during school break time.

Get out:

The technician will clear up the fish, which has been thrown into the class at the end of the performance.

Max number of pupils:

One class size, maximum 30

Duration:

40 minutes.

After the performance:

A post show conversation (up to 15 minutes) with the company is also available and pupils get a huge amount from this experience. These conversations give pupils an opportunity to discuss themes explored in the show with the actor and open doors for teachers and pupils to talk honestly about growing up, grief, love, loss, loneliness, mental health issues. Pupils also enjoy being able to see 'behind the scenes' of the performance and finding out about the origins and practicalities of the show and how the company works.

Please see below for more information on suggested follow-up activities and questions to assist post show classroom discussions and writing exercises.

Issues for teachers to be aware of

Titus is a vivacious and funny story about a 10 year old boy standing on the edge of his school roof about to jump.

Titus talks directly to the audience about everything - the loss of his mother, his father's inability to deal with his grief and relate to him; his friendships at school; meetings with his psychologist and his first love, Tina. Although these are very serious issues, Titus is delivered with a great deal of humour which the young audiences enjoy. Titus is a boy with a huge imagination which helps him cope with stress and navigate difficult emotional situations in his life.

Themes:

Growing up, grief, love, loss, loneliness, mental health

Mental health awareness:

Mental health problems affect about 1 in 10 children and young people. They include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and are often a direct response to what is happening in their lives.

The emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Titus can open doors for teachers and pupils to talk honestly about mental health issues. A number of resources are available online to support teaching on wellbeing and mental health. See the useful resources section at the end of the pack.

Follow up activities

Discussion: Questions to assist post show classroom discussions:

1. What was the most memorable moment in the story for you?
2. How did the performance make you feel?
3. What did you notice about how the story was told?
For example – do you think this is a narrative? Was there a beginning, middle and end?
How do portraits, places, vignettes work together in a non-linear way to create a narrative or dramatic arc?
4. What do you think happened next for Titus?

Writing Exercises: Creating list poems*

The primary idea here is that real events create the moments around which we create stories. Exploring, talking and writing about these moments can help us find ways of communicating our own stories.

1. Pupils choose a real life event to write about. Share their real life event with a partner to remind themselves of the details of the event.
Pick someone from the event you described above. Write them a post card with 3 sentences or as an alphabet “poem.”
2. Think about the way Titus remembered his Gran (see passage below).
Think of someone important to you. Make a list poem about that person. Your list should include specific imagery and details of memories about them. It should have 14 lines.
Teachers think about how you will help students with the descriptors in these lists.
3. Think of an important emotion in the experience you described above. What is it?
Remember the crow in Titus? The crow may have been a symbol of his sadness.
Decide on an animal that could represent the emotion you have named.
Teachers think about creating a list of animals with the pupils that could represent different emotions, e.g what might the following animals represent: pigeon, porcupine, bear, weasel, sloth, snake, beetle.
4. Another list poem idea: Impossible wishes.
Think of a series of impossibilities (like a fish falling from the sky, or a cow walking into a room).
Think of a series of wishes. Create 7-9 if / then statements – IF (impossible thing) then (wish).
If this writing happens at the end, its likely that the mind will be warmed up from working on the poems / events above and that the list of impossible wishes will be connected.

You now have some of the ingredients for writing your own monologue.

* This activity was created by Papaya (Philadelphia Performing Arts for Youth) and is adapted with their kind permission for this pack

Other ideas:

Watch the short video with the Director and English version writer for more ideas:
<https://vimeo.com/165638824>

Letter to Gran from Titus script:

Dear Gran,

I miss your blue apron
with its five buttons

I want to reach all the way up to the fourth button
be as tall as you.

I want to hear your footsteps in the hall again
smell your smell again

listen to your stories on the bus again

eat your cheesy pasta again

stick your false teeth in my mouth again

laugh together again

until our bellies ache.

I want to fall off my bike again

I want you to come and comfort me again

I want you to shout night night pyjama pyjama again

I want you to tell me that the secret of not growing up is to die young again

I want to hear you to sing Edith Piaf again

Non! Rien de rien! Non! Je ne regrette de rien...

Useful information and resources:

Interview with the creative team about the ideas behind the show

<https://vimeo.com/166492876>

Young Minds mental health resources for schools and teaching

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/training_and_consultancy/for_schools

Penumbra provide mental health support services including education activity in schools

<http://www.penumbra.org.uk/innovation/educational-work/>

If you'd like any additional information, or have any feedback on the show, please contact Red Bridge

Arts team – hello@redbridgearts.co.uk